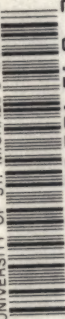


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ST. BRUNO :
FOUNDER OF THE CARTHUSIAN ORDER.

THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

CONSIDERED IN ITS APOSTOLIC
ASPECT

By a Carthusian Monk

Translated from the seventh French edition by
A. M. Buchanan, M.A.



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Preface to the English Edition

THE late Cardinal Vaughan was still Bishop of Salford when he wrote a little pamphlet on the necessity of prayer for the conversion of England; and at the end of his long and intensively active career he seemed to receive still more light, and to understand better that God wanted from him "more prayer than activity."

This little book is full of the same doctrine. It was written some years ago by a Carthusian monk, and many English readers who could appreciate the original, expressed the desire to see it translated, for the benefit of those who cannot read it in French.

It will be found that the translation has been beautifully and faithfully made, in spite of real difficulties.

FR. PETER M. PEPIN,
Prior.

ST. HUGH'S CHARTERHOUSE,
PARTRIDGE GREEN,
SUSSEX.

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INTRODUCTION

The Apostolic aspect of the Contemplative Life.

THAT the contemplative life has an apostolic aspect is an idea with which the feverish activity of modern life is unfamiliar. It is more apt to ask what can be the practical use of idle men, shut up alone in contemplation, at a time when there is so much to be done ; what can they *do* in their state of isolation ? On hearing that they live lives of prayer and self-sacrifice, the ordinary man is inclined to ask why ? and for whom ? And the answer is that they do so for the good of souls, that greatly need both prayer and self-sacrifice. Are we not too much in the habit of forgetting that prayer and penance are indispensable to the conversion of sinners, to the progress of the good and to the perfection of the Saints ?

In the Church, prayer and penance are the duties that belong to the subsidiary ministry assigned to the Contemplative Orders, and they practise them for the conversion of sinners, for the progress of the good in virtue and for the perfection of the Saints.

To explain this to his brethren, both in the cloister and in the world, has been the purpose of

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the author of this little work. Himself a contemplative, he desires to speak to his brethren in the cloister, in order to encourage them to greater devotion, by reminding them of the apostolic greatness of their vocation. He desires to address also his brethren in the world, in order to awaken and guide vocations to this life, that is so hidden, so heroic and so productive of good. It is to the advantage of the cloistered to call to mind why they exist, and the world needs information on the subject, so that in this way this little work is adapted both to religious and seculars. May it serve to revive the divine fervour of our monasteries and to give light to heroic souls in the world !

It consists of two parts, dealing respectively with principles and with facts. Seventeen chapters are occupied with discussing the need and value of the spirit of apostolic devotion that properly belongs to the contemplative life. Twelve other chapters deal with the mode of life in some of the chief existing Contemplative Orders for men and women. In conclusion there is a chapter calling upon those who feel the vocation to embrace this life of devotion. May this appeal be heard both in religious houses and in the world !

The Contemplative Life.

I.—The Decay of Faith.

FAITH is passing away, and it is the most terrible of all misfortunes. No other disaster can be compared with it, for no possession is so precious as faith, which is the foundation and root of all good. What is a nation deprived of faith? What is a man whose faith is wavering? Every nation, like every individual possessing faith in his own destiny, succeeds in accomplishing something that is useful—but without faith of some kind, nothing is done ; life without faith is barren, and this is true with regard to the supernatural even more than to the natural. “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” *Sine fide impossibile est placere Deo.* (Heb. xi. 6).

Every man and every nation who has done anything for God, has done so in proportion to the faith within him.

Faith is passing away ! Such is the triumphant cry of the wicked and the complaint of the good ; and the number of the former is ever increasing, whilst believers are becoming more rare. Agnostics boast of their scientific knowledge, the faithful

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seem to know nothing. The enemies of God redouble their audacity whilst even His friends allow themselves to waver. Evil grows bold and goodness becomes lukewarm. Blasphemy and atheism proclaim themselves with triumphant audacity and strong, deep convictions give way.

There are, it is true, some faithful souls still left, but how few they are ! What is the faith of the great majority of those who are called Christians ? Is it anything but an ignorant kind of assent, a superficial religion, a piety that is chiefly external, consisting of some shreds of truth and a confused mass of outward observances ? The shadow remains, but there is very little substance, and it is precisely because the substance is passing away that good and evil alike, with very different feelings, utter the cry : “ Faith is becoming extinct.”

It is indeed passing ; will it leave us altogether ? The duty of reviving the divine flame rests with those in whom some spark of it still glimmers.

O faithful souls, suffer it not to be said that faith is becoming extinct ! We have it in our power to prevent God from removing our candlestick,* and to retain the light in our country ; yes, we have the power, and we ought to use it. Let us determine to do so with all the energy that we possess. Let us cling to our faith and bring it back, a true and living faith, strong and fruitful, sincere and pure, simple and practical ; a sturdy and efficacious

* *Movebo candelabrum tuum de loco suo, nisi pœnitentiam egeris* (Apoc. ii. 5).

faith, able to conquer all the forces of the world.* Let us preserve our faith and revive it in the souls where some trace of it still lingers, and strive to impart to them that fulness of light which will make them see our Lord in all things, and that fulness of love, which will make them respect all His claims upon them. Under all circumstances the human soul needs to recognize the Lord who has made us and governs us, and to remember how He does so. He is the Master who has planned our existence and is directing our work according to His good pleasure. He is the Master, and it is for us to do His will and carry out His designs, and in order to do this, we must keep them ever before our eyes, and therefore we require the bright light of living faith, to turn away our gaze from the vanities of things created and to fix it thoroughly upon our Master. Not only must our eyes be fixed on Him, but our hearts also ; for we must love what He claims of us, love His will truly and respect it loyally. Let us give back to the souls of men this upright and living faith in their Lord.

Let us give back to them their faith in God, their only good, the end and consummation of their lives. Why have we to pass through this earthly existence? Are we to seek either amusement or weariness here? No, we are here in order that we may go hence to our heavenly

* *Hæc est victoria, quæ vincit mundum, fides nostra* (1 Joan v. 4).

Father, and live with Him for ever and ever. Alas ! how apt we are to forget that our journey in this world belongs only to time, and our joy in heaven to eternity ! How often do the mists of this material existence obscure the brightness of eternity, our hopes based on faith, the promises given by faith, the everlasting realities, and the immortality of life in God ! We are so steeped in lower pleasures that we forget what is higher. It is indeed necessary to bring back men's souls to the warm rays of the divine light, to disperse the clouds that envelop them, and to restore to them the thought of eternity and the desire to rise to heaven.

II.—Our Spiritual Foes.

ALL the powers of hell are in league to deprive souls of their faith. This has ever been the case and will continue to be so, as long as there is in this world a soul to deceive. Our life on earth is a constant warfare.* A warfare, not against creatures of flesh and blood, but against spiritual principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places.† The great force capable of resisting the assaults of the evil one is faith‡, but not every form of faith suffices to repel every kind of evil spirit, there are some against whom special weapons must be used, as our Lord Himself taught us.

One day He saw a man in the midst of the multitude, who fell down on his knees before Him saying, “Lord, have pity on my son, for he is a lunatic and suffereth much, for he falleth often into the fire and often into the water, and I brought him to Thy disciples, and they could not heal him.” Jesus exclaimed: “O, unbelieving

* *Militia est vita hominis super terram* (Job. vii. 1).

† *Quoniam non est nobis colluctatio adversus carnem et sanguinem, sed adversus principes et potestates, adversus mundi rectores tenebrarum harum, contra spiritualia nequitiae in cœlestibus* (Eph. vi. 12).

‡ *Cui resistite fortes in fide* (1 Peter v. 9).

and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to me."

He commanded the devil to come out of him, and the child was cured from that hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus secretly, and said, "Why could not we cast him out?" Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief. For, amen I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, Remove from hence thither, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you. But this kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting" (St. Matthew xvii. 14-20).

Ordinary faith suffices to cast out the ordinary evil spirits, but in order to overcome more powerful adversaries, extraordinary faith is needed, and it can be acquired only by prayer and fasting. If any one asks why prayer and fasting are essential, we must reply, "Man consists of body and soul, there are two substances within him, the one material and the other spiritual, and in order to resist the spirit of evil, these two substances must be brought into contact with the spirit of good, and spiritualized, each in its own way. The soul is spiritualized by prayer and the body by penance, which raises it into the regions of the spirit, just as prayer uplifts the soul. These are two wings enabling man to rise towards God, and it is only in proportion as he does so, that he gains strength to resist evil. His degree of exaltation

indicates the measure of his strength, and his exaltation is proportionate to the power of prayer and penance that he has attained. Faith raises man to God, and man is too feeble to overcome evil if he lacks faith; the greater his faith the greater his strength. If he realizes his own weakness in face of the enemy, he must strive to lift himself up to God and to increase his faith, and both are done by way of prayer and penance.

The whole human race, outraged by the attacks of the evil one, also needs to be raised up, and to increase in faith, and neither can be done except by way of prayer and penance. But how can nations be uplifted? How can they recover faith that is dying out? How can a people, incapable of praying or of suffering, be brought back to prayer and penance? . . .

At the present day there is urgent need of both, for the evil spirits going about to destroy souls are more numerous and more terrible than ever.

Impurity triumphs everywhere, in our theatres and places of amusement, on holidays and in the streets, in pictures and books, in public institutions and even in private families. Crime of every sort abounds. The minds of all classes are being corrupted by education interwoven with falsehood, blasphemy, error and impiety. A spirit of pride and rebellion embitters individuals and stirs up the masses. Urged on by the powers of hell, men strive to enjoy pleasure in all its forms, they seek to please their bodies, hearts and minds.

They wish to enjoy life, and beyond this they have no further aim, but for the sake of enjoyment they are breaking down the old barriers of respect for authority, of self-control and dignity, of uprightness and honesty, of faith and loyalty. All the old beliefs and customs, traditions and habits, even family and social life are in danger of being swallowed up in a great cataclysm of foulness, bloodshed and sin.

If ever there was a time when the struggle against evil called for valiant soldiers bearing powerful arms, it is the present. May God give us brave men, well armed, that right may triumph over wrong !

III.—The Two Kinds of Ministry.

OUR Lord sent His apostles into the villages, bidding them practise works of divine goodness, they were to preach, to heal the sick and to cast out devils. And the disciples went forth and returned with joy, saying: "Lord, the devils also are subject to us in Thy Name" (St. Luke x. 1-17).

This was the ordinary and exterior **ministry of action**, and it is both necessary and fertile in results; it is fundamental in the organization of the Church, and the usual means of its growth. But it alone does not suffice, for **it breaks down in face of certain difficulties**, and then we must have recourse to another ministry with spiritual powers and instruments, which may be called the **ministry of divine union**. I call it a ministry, for in every organic body there must be a special organism for the performance of each organic function. The Church is the mystical body of Christ, and if the active functions require active organs, no less do the contemplative functions require contemplative organs, and these organs and their functions make up the ministry of divine union, for **their aim is to remain close to God, and to derive from Him the treasures of the divine life**.

In the social organization of the Church this

two-fold ministry corresponds to the two-fold grace which bestows the divine life in its fulness upon each individual soul. There is an active grace, setting in motion the activities of the soul, and determining and maintaining them ; this is called **actual grace**. But there is another kind of grace, higher and more spiritual, which binds the soul to God, and raises it to an ever closer union with Him, and this is **sanctifying grace**. Likewise in the Church there is the two-fold ministry of action and of union ; the former refers more directly to men, acts upon them and exercises over them the influence of God's power ; the other refers more directly to God, and is in more immediate communication with Him, so as to derive from Him what it is the task of the active ministry to distribute.

Is this not the principle governing every living organism? In each man's body are two classes of organs, those of nutrition and those of relation ; the action of the former is interior and that of the latter is exterior. The fundamental law is life ; the body is made to live, and when it ceases to live, it decays. Life must be nourished, supported and increased from within ; it must defend and recruit itself, act and be propagated without. Therefore the very law of life requires there to be some organs destined to discharge the interior functions and others to discharge the exterior functions of life. Both are necessary to life, and together they compose the body, and their

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combined functions secure sustenance and activity to life.

The Church, too, is a body, a living body, and its life too must be nourished within and propagated without. There are accordingly both internal and external vital functions and organs destined to perform both these classes of functions. The Church in Heaven possesses the double ministry of angels present before the throne of God and angels who carry out His bidding, and in the same way the Church on earth possesses the ministry of contemplation and that of action.

Both are public ministries, officially organized for the general wellbeing of the Church as a whole, and the justification for their existence is independent of the personal necessities of those who participate in them.

An apostle is not an apostle primarily or chiefly for his own sake, but in order to labour for the sanctification of others. If he is called to this ministry, it is for the good of the Church. In the same way it is not primarily or chiefly for its own sake that a soul is called to join a contemplative order, when it is so called, but it is to perform the higher service of prayer and penance, which has power to drive out evil spirits. Both alike are forms of public ministry.

When I say that the contemplative life is no less a public ministry than the active life, I am speaking of their relative functions, both aiming at the general welfare of the Church, but I do not

mean that the special organizations, in which they are incorporated, belong to the essential constitution of the Church in the same degree and manner. The hierarchical organization of the ministry of the Church, consisting of bishops, priests and the lower clergy, alone forms the graduated foundation of the whole body. The religious orders are complementary and providential organizations. I shall explain later how and why the double function, concentrated originally in the apostles, was subsequently assigned to distinct organizations, but although this has taken place, both functions remain public in their nature, object and aim.

No doubt one who leads the contemplative life sanctifies himself in contemplation, just as one who leads the apostolic life sanctifies himself in action. Both attain to holiness, and if they did not, they would have no personal power to sanctify others.

The life-giving action of the divine sacraments does not, of course, depend upon the sanctity of the men who administer them, for their efficacy is derived from God and not from man. Moreover, God has not fettered Himself to such a degree as that His action should depend solely and absolutely upon the manner in which His ministers conform to His will. He can act for Himself, and make even obstacles promote the sanctification of His elect. Still it is true that, in the usual course ordained by Providence, He prefers to make use

of the personal help of the men whom He chooses for Himself, and history teaches us how much the influence of the Saints has done to increase the growth of holiness, and how quickly evil is multiplied by the carelessness of those who are false to their trust. Christ, the great teacher of holiness, said "And for them do I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth."*

No part of the body can perform its particular function beneficially, except in proportion to its health ; it must be healthy if it is to do any good work. Yet health is not the reason for its existence, which is to discharge in and for the whole body the particular function assigned to it.

There is, in the case of each part of the body, a close relation between its health and its function. If it be not healthy, it cannot do its work ; if it fail in doing its work, it cannot remain in health. Health renders work possible, and work renders health vigorous.

Neither work nor health can be neglected without causing suffering to both, for they are inseparable. A member of a body cannot forget itself and be careless as to its own health, without inflicting injury on the body as a whole. Nor can it lose sight of its own particular work and disregard the body, except under pain of losing

* Et pro eis ego sanctifico meipsum, ut sint et ipsi sanctificati in veritate (Joan xvii. 19).

its own health. It has to live, and therefore it is bound to take thought for its health, but as it has to live in and for the body, its health is no less intimately connected with its work, than the member itself is with the body. How can a member be severed from a body without perishing itself and injuring the whole body? In this way the welfare of the whole body is inseparably connected with that of each individual part, the one being ordered with reference to the other, and resulting in its turn from the other. The member spends its life in the service of the body, and the body bestows upon it in return a higher perfection of life. The gift is reciprocal, enriching both. We should never shrink from giving, even from giving ourselves, for it is through giving that we receive, and what we receive is proportionate to what we give. Happy are the souls that know how to give, and do not forbear to give themselves ; they receive much in return ! It is more blessed to give than to receive,* for he that gives receives,† and he who begins by receiving, and gives nothing, ends by receiving nothing at all.

To give oneself, wholly and without reserve, to God is the ideal of every religious, his impulse, his necessity, his life ; and Christians recognize this fact, for we often hear it said of one who has embraced the religious life : “ He has given himself to God.” O God, raise up amongst us men

* *Beatius est magis dare quam accipere* (Act. xx. 36).

† *Date et dabitur vobis* (Luc. vi. 38).

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capable of giving themselves to Thee ; men capable of living for their own good and for that of Thy Church, men who can value their own souls and Thy Church, and will never separate one from the other !

O Lord Jesus, grant that we may become true members of Thy mystical body, sound and vigorous in ourselves and full of active devotion to the service of Thy body, the Church.

IV.—Useless Lives.

WE have seen how the necessity, advantages and duties of the two ministries, active and contemplative may be deduced from our Lord's own words. The world in its feverish activity now understands but half of God's design. It appreciates action, but not contemplation. Men know and perceive and acknowledge the need of action, and they esteem highly whatever acts and agitates, and nothing else. In so doing they are only being consistent with human nature, but they are mistaken. Activity is indeed necessary, and cannot be too highly esteemed, but it alone is not enough, or rather if it suffices in the bustle of everyday life, it does not suffice for that of a Christian, which is a union of divine and human elements. In our present century, when faith is departing, as soon as a generous soul flees from the world and seeks refuge in the solitude of the cloister, men speak of it as a cowardly act, not in keeping with the age in which we live. They assume that this outwardly inactive, existence was a beautiful outgrowth, a luxury produced by faith in the days when faith reigned supreme. But now that we have to defend every foot of our stronghold, and are losing ground day by day, we need active combatants, and have not too many or even

enough of them. Under such circumstances, how can we view with approval those souls which are filled with faith and yet quit the field of battle? This is what people say, though they do not know what they are saying. They talk of battle, without seeing what sort of battle it is; and they speak of a battle field, and do not perceive where the contest rages most fiercely. They accuse the most generous souls of abandoning the fray, when they are really engaging in the hottest part of the struggle.

It does indeed behove us to fight, and whosoever deserts God's standard in order to indulge in selfish indolence is a traitor. We must struggle for God and the Church, for our faith and for the souls of men, and we must do so with energy and with undaunted courage, but at the same time we must avail ourselves of favourable opportunities and places, and use good weapons and wise tactics. It is not everything to go forth to fight, not all who go forth shall come back victorious, and anyone who is not well equipped will do well to stay quietly at home, and not let himself be killed to no purpose.

But is the conflict with the powers of evil, one of active warfare? Our Divine Leader has taught us that they can be overcome only by prayer and penance, so how can we venture to say that the most generous and devoted souls, most eager for the holy warfare, are deserting the battle, when we see them have recourse to these weapons?

Should they be called cowardly, selfish and useless? Can we so utterly fail to understand our Lord's words, and our own faith and hope, or to recognize our standards and our own party? Only madmen fire on their own troops, and try to remove the best soldiers from the most vital point that they are defending with all their devotion.

Let us once more consider our Lord's words. He tells us that there is an abundant harvest and that the workers are few. One might fancy that He would go on to bid His apostles hasten to gather in the harvest. As the harvest is abundant and the workers are too few, the natural conclusion, at which we should arrive, would be: "Hasten, therefore, and busy yourselves about the harvest." But God's conclusion is: "*Pray therefore*, pray the lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into his harvest."*

There is much work to be done, and for that reason there is great need of prayer—such is the divine argument. And for what are we to pray? That the Lord may send forth labourers. Our Lord does not tell us to have recourse to prayer in order to find peace in it, to fold our arms quietly and not trouble about the harvest, to secure our personal salvation comfortably, being sheltered from sun and rain. No indeed. He means prayer to be a work of apostolic devotion, the

* *Messis quidem multa, operarii autem pauci; rogate ergo dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messem suam* (Matt. ix. 38).

first and foremost of such works, inasmuch as it precedes and procures the sending forth of the labourers. Two things are needful, prayer and labourers ; prayer comes first, and the labourers follow, and they will not come at all if there has been no prayer ; and, in the same way, if prayer does not call forth labourers, it has failed in its object.

Here then we have an indication of the union of the two ministries and of their co-operation in the great task of gathering in a harvest of souls. They ought never to be separated, as, when deprived of mutual support, one loses its life and the other its object. If those leading the contemplative life do not pray for men of action, they are in danger of being mere dreamers with no practical aim. If apostolic activity does not derive its life from contemplation and prayer, it quickly degenerates into morbid excitement, and falls into decay, without achieving any result.

V.—The Organization of the Church.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ, having come into the world to do His Father's business, spent thirty years of His life in the silence of prayer and work ; and during the three years that He devoted to His public ministry, He often spent whole nights in prayer to God.*

His work, therefore, began with contemplation, and ended with action. The Apostles having inherited His spirit, being trained in His school, and desiring to continue His task, at first reserved to themselves the great duty of prayer, and afterwards the ministry of the word, delegating to others more active occupations,† and through their prayers and words the Church received a definite organization. Around each bishop gathered a group of priests and clergy, who used to unite first in prayer before giving themselves out in action, starting from a common centre to exercise the ministry of the Church. In this way the various local churches were founded. The

* Et erat pernoctans in oratione Dei (Luc. vi. 12).

† Non est æquum nos derelinquere verbum Dei et ministrare mensis. . . . Nos vero orationi et ministerio verbi instantes erimus (Act

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vital cell or nucleus at the centre of the organization was the college of priests and clergy gathered round the bishop, attending in the first place to public worship, and deriving from this prayer offered in common the strength to convert men to the faith.

Of this ancient organization a trace still remains in the canonical college, which is a necessary adjunct of an episcopal see, and without which a diocese is incomplete. The canons have to co-operate with the bishop in managing the diocesan business, but the prime reason for their existence and their chief duty is to celebrate the canonical office. They are officially charged with the obligation of offering the public prayer of the diocese. A cathedral church, the mother and ruler of all the churches in the diocese, is bound to maintain the solemn recitation of the whole divine office; this is a fundamental principle in canon law. In the eyes of the Church a diocese appears deprived of its chief glory, when it no longer has at its head, men regularly appointed to say the divine office publicly.

Priests are not released from their obligation to join in the public prayer of the Church, because their duty towards their flocks forces them to cut themselves off from the episcopal college and to live in the midst of the people committed to their care. This obligation is so fundamental that it is called *par excellence* their *office* or duty; it is in fact the only task that bears this name, not be-

cause it is a priest's sole duty, but because it is his first and chief business.

Whoever examines the true spirit of the sacred hierarchy cannot but perceive that its basis and chief object is prayer. Nor is it difficult to see that the second characteristic of the ministry is penance. Ecclesiastical discipline exists to reveal what the Church enjoins upon her priests and what she forbids. She forbids them to indulge in worldly and frivolous amusements and in luxury of every kind ; she cuts them off from enjoying family life and breaks the ties of kinship ; she bids them wear the official garb of penance and requires them to practise chastity of body and to have the spirit of obedience in all their conduct. She asks of them self-denial and self-sacrifice, generosity and devotion, abandonment of the world and all belonging to it. It is the first duty of a priest to be a personification of prayer, but it is no less his duty to show himself to the world as an example of penance.

These two characteristics give a priest a two-fold power. When Moses came down from his forty days' communing with God on Mount Sinai, he had on his brow two horns of light, which remained in token of his conversation with God, so that he appeared before the people with the authority imparted by this heavenly halo.

* Cumque descenderet Moyses de monte Sinai, tenebat duas tabulas testimonii, et ignorabat quod cornuta esset facies sua ex consortio sermonis Domini (Exod. xxxiv. 29).

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When a priest, true to his vocation, draws near to God in prayer and penance, he too appears before the people bearing on his brow this two-fold ray of divine light, whence his words and actions receive weight and authority. What divine light and power of persuasion proceed from prayer and penance on the part of a priest! O God, grant to all Thy priests this double glory, and then faith, instead of passing away, will shine resplendent in the midst of the nations.

VI.—The Religious Orders.

THE ecclesiastical hierarchy forms the official staff in God's army, but in addition to the regular troops, there are companies of volunteers who do valuable service, and, being more lightly equipped and trained for a more special object, often succeed in making a vigorous attack upon some definite point, and prove in this way the most zealous promoters of God's designs. It is in this way that the Religious Orders have come into being; they originated in the needs of the struggle and of life. In the history of the Church we can trace their development in proportion to the necessities of the various periods. Invariably has a great necessity given rise to the foundation of a great Order, and as prayer and penance are of fundamental importance, we see that the contemplative Orders arose before the active.

It is most interesting to study, in the course of events composing the history of the Church, the gradual growth of the Religious Orders, to consider the time and order in which they appeared, and to trace their influence and the results of their action. It is a delightful task to survey the work of each, and the harmony resulting from their united labours, to follow their persevering struggle against evil and the ways opened to new horizons.

They have always been so strong to act in defence of the Church, so ready to undertake fresh labours on her behalf. We may say that every great conception, every mighty contest has been supported by a Religious Order.

In the first centuries Palestine and Egypt contained thousands of monks, heroes of prayer and penance, from whom the intense life of Oriental Christianity is derived. Then St. Basil became the father of that host of religious who, for so many centuries, preserved and defended the faith in the Byzantine Empire. In the west, St. Augustine and St. Benedict each wrote a religious rule, that has exercised an incalculable influence upon the formation of Christian Europe. All these monks led the contemplative life, and their chief, habitual occupations, were the divine works of prayer and penance, by means of which they exerted their influence most beneficially. The monasteries were like so many suns, rising amidst the mists and foulness of paganism, dispersing the thick vapours and causing a wonderful wealth of Christian virtues to grow even from the mire. It is remarkable to see how the earth became fruitful and the atmosphere wholesome wherever the Religious Orders shed their light, even at a time when all around darkness and gloom prevailed and corruption covered the earth. Whenever a country was thickly studded with monasteries, it became Christian. It would not be difficult to prove logically and historically, that

the number and state of the houses belonging to the contemplative Orders supply a most exact criterion of the intensity and depth of Christian life in any country.

Mgr. Lefebvre, Bishop of Cochin China, perceived this clearly, when, immediately after his consecration, being filled with the light of the Holy Spirit, he formed the resolution to found a convent of Carmelites at Saïgon. The governor, hearing that this was the bishop's first decision, remarked that one should not think of luxuries before having a house to live in, and received the answer, "What you call a luxury is, in my opinion, the first necessity of our Christian ministry. Ten religious who pray will help me more than twenty missionaries who preach."

The general vocation of the ancient Orders was, therefore, contemplation, and it was by practising prayer and penance that they exerted their apostolic influence over the world. Owing to their intimate converse with God in prayer, they were able to preserve in themselves and to diffuse around them the bright light of faith, free from all admixture of error. Owing to their self denial in the spirit of penance, they were able to preserve in themselves and diffuse around them the purity of Christian morality. The faith and morality of Christianity! These are the glory of the Church and the honour of mankind; two lights sent from heaven to earth, of which hell would fain deprive the world, and

which the religious houses have done much to retain.

Great heresies and terrible evils have been shattered by the faith abiding in monasteries, whence many of the greatest bishops and popes have come forth. Sometimes even, when urgent necessity constrained them, the monks have quitted their cloisters and flung themselves into the struggle, and have maintained the rights of God by their burning words and even by shedding their blood.

On the other hand the decay of the religious houses has always been an omen of the downfall of nations. As soon as the sun sets, the mists returns, and the growth of Christian virtues ceases to rise above the mire of human wickedness; paganism reasserts itself and faith and morality vanish.

The middle ages witnessed the foundation of military Orders for the defence of Christendom. Next came the heroic Orders instituted for the redemption of prisoners, then the preaching Orders. In modern times the teaching Orders have become prominent, and we now possess a splendid wealth of missionary institutions and of congregations devoted to every kind of good work, spiritual and corporal. These are the active Orders, and we may well rejoice at their increase in numbers, and at their vigour and prolific growth, showing as they do such devoted zeal. Thousands and thousands of souls, eager

for the service of God, seek it in the religious life, and we must give thanks on their behalf to the Holy Spirit, who still imparts power to our poor human nature to bring forth such abundant fruit.

VII.—The High Vocation Neglected.

It is impossible to deny a historical fact, especially when it is explained and emphasized by our Saviour's own solemn words: "This kind (of devil) is not cast out but by prayer and fasting."

Do not generous souls at the present time need to be reminded that in prayer and fasting are to be found the most divine self-sacrifice and the beginning of all apostolic work? The needs of the Church are boundless, and this vocation is too much neglected because it is overlooked, and its being thus overlooked is due to a want of practical belief in its apostolic efficacy. Men have lost sight of this aspect of the contemplative life and have grown accustomed to regard it as a somewhat selfish pursuit of one's own personal salvation. What is really its dominating idea is obscured, and for this reason generous souls no longer feel attracted towards it. It is neglected and forgotten at a time when it is more needed than ever.

The general tendency of those who wish to do good is to be active, and although activity is in itself most edifying, it becomes fraught with danger when it alone occupies men's minds. They can form an idea of self-sacrifice manifested outwardly, and they know and appreciate those who

practise it ; but they are no longer capable of perceiving inward self-sacrifice, the divine virtue of secret self-renunciation.

If the apostolic efficacy of this inward sacrifice were better understood, would there not be more souls eager to enter upon the life that involves it ? The generous impulses of Christianity have not yet lost all force, and if noble souls are too apt to halt on the hills of action instead of ascending to the loftier heights of contemplation, it is certainly more through ignorance than through cowardice. They fancy that they will accomplish more in God's service if, heedless of suffering, they plunge into the fray, than would be possible were they to withdraw into the desert to work out their own salvation. Such is their line of argument, and the conclusion at which they arrive is just, but their arguments are vitiated by their narrow and mistaken conception of the contemplative life, which appears to be merely a means of securing one's personal salvation. A generous soul cannot hesitate long when the choice is between self-sacrifice for the good of others and solitary self-concentration. But on the other hand brave hearts, on fire with love of God, will hardly waver when they have to decide whether to devote themselves to labour for God's glory amidst the tumult of worldly business or in the stillness of great inward self-denial. Not every one is called to ascend these heights, but may there not be some who are called, and yet do not respond, believin

that they can put their life to a better use by devoting it to outward works? Is not the world too often deprived in this way of those higher influences that can do so much to raise mankind towards God? Amidst the religious confusion existing in our disorganized social life, may it not be a work of the greatest utility to show the apostolic value of contemplation and devotion, in order that souls eager for self-sacrifice and prayer may become more numerous and more fervent?

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VIII.—The Vows.

WE ought, however, to begin by trying to understand **what the religious life really is.** In ordinary language, to be religious is to serve God, but in that sense every Christian is a servant of God. The religious life involves a special pledge to a special form of service, and the religious binds himself more strictly to more direct labour for God. He has therefore bonds and labours that are peculiarly his own, and that makes him a religious. In fact the religious life consists essentially in these bonds and labours. The bonds are laid upon him by his vows, and his sphere of labour is determined by his rule. There can no more be a religious Order without vows and a rule, than there can be a man without a soul, a plant without sap, or a day without light.

Let us examine the vows and the rule more closely. **The vows are a solemn undertaking made with God to do His work.** They bind, but perhaps I ought rather to have said **they release,** for this is their primary effect ; **they set men free by stripping them of all encumbrances,** and this must be the first step taken by those who pledge themselves to the special service of God.

The three fundamental vows of the religious

life are those of **chastity**, poverty and obedience. These are common to all the religious Orders, at least in substance, for no congregation is raised to the dignity of an Order unless it requires the profession of these three vows, and this is so because, the religious life being the exclusive service of God, whoever wishes to devote himself to it must be free from every other kind of service. He will not be truly and definitely dedicated to God's service, unless he is absolutely free from all other claims upon him, and the first form of subjection which he must shake off is that of the senses. He must break the bonds of kinship, and renounce, not only the dishonourable fetters of the passions but also the honourable ones of family life, which tend to make us cling so closely to one another, whilst they hold us aloof from others with whom we are not thus connected. The vow of chastity releases us from all these ties and gives us liberty to serve God and to seek union with Him.

The possession of external goods is another fetter, for the heart that thinks it possesses anything, is itself a prey to disastrous self-deception. No heart is so divided as one which is pre-occupied by the thought of riches. The vow of poverty breaks this bond, and sets the human heart free to love God and to be united with Him.

Anxieties regarding the line of conduct to adopt and the course of life to follow absorb much of our activity of mind. When the vow of obedience

puts the direction of our life in the hands of another, our spirit acquires full liberty to contemplate God and to seek union with Him.

Human nature is essentially the same in all men, for all possess senses, a heart, and a spirit, and the three vows are absolutely indispensable in every religious Order, because the members of it are to be wholly given up to the service of God. The spirit is detached from everything and bound to God by the vow of obedience ; the heart is detached from everything and bound to God by the vow of poverty, and the senses are detached from everything and bound to God by the vow of chastity, and thus the whole man is placed solely under the rule of his one Master.

Some Orders add supplementary vows to the three that are fundamental. For instance, in the Benedictine Order, the three vows are all included in that of obedience, which is the chief of them, and this, being the central point of the religious life, is strengthened by two others, by the vow of stability, that precedes it and serves as an outward guarantee for its observance, and by the vow of reformation of conduct, that follows it and is its inward guarantee. Other Orders add a vow to preach in heathen lands ; not to accept dignities ; or even a very special vow of obedience to the Sovereign Pontiff, etc.

Such are the general and particular means whereby a man pledges himself to the service of God. But, it may be asked, are not these vows

obstacles to the free action of human nature? Yes, indeed, they are obstacles; just as an embankment is an obstacle to a rushing stream, and rails to a train, and pipes to steam. It is obvious that the embankment checks the torrent, the rails prevent the train from going where it will, and the pipes retain the steam, and so the vows fetter a religious. But, without these impediments, the torrent would devastate the country, the train could not run, steam would be useless, and a religious of no account. What is the good of the impediments? They secure the course of the stream, the speed of the train, the force of the steam and the elevation of soul experienced in the religious life. They are sought and desired because they are expedient and necessary. The torrent needs its solid embankments, the train its secure rails, the steam its firmly-fixed pipes, and the religious the safeguard of his vows. By aid of these things, the river will reach the sea, the train will arrive at its destination, the steam will act on the machinery, and the religious will attain to God. Obstacles that prove to be the best aids towards gaining one's end are indeed providential.

If only thoughtful souls in the world realized better the concentration of forces, the economy of vital energy, and the impulse towards heaven bestowed on men by the repression due to the vows, fewer lives would be frittered away and the means of doing good would be less recklessly squandered. A religious binds himself by his vows not in order

to crush his existence, but to avoid wasting it ; not to impose a heavier burden upon himself, but to constrain himself to rise higher ; not to vegetate within four walls, but to breathe the purer air of heaven. Happy are the souls called to understand, appreciate, and make use of the power of the religious vows !

IX.—The Rule.

WHEN a man enters upon the religious life, he pledges himself to the *service* of God ; hence there are two chief elements in this life, bondage and work. The vows constitute the bonds, and the work is prescribed by the rule. We have considered what the vows are, and why they exist ; let us now study the rule in the same way.

The essential object of the rule is to lay down the particular conditions of the service required by God of each person who binds himself by it, and to fit him to fulfil those conditions. The object is, therefore twofold ; the work is stated, and the religious is adapted to the work. The rule does not merely point out what has to be done, but it provides for doing it. In order to understand a rule, we must consider it under these two aspects ; *Firstly*, as a means of determining the work to be done for God, and, *secondly*, as a means of preparing and fitting the religious for the performance of this work.

Rules owe their origin to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and the sanction of the Church. The Spirit of God, according to our Saviour's promise, abides in the Church and dwells in each faithful member of it,* never ceasing to accomplish in it

* Apud vos manebit et in vobis erit (Joan xiv. 17).

the works of God. This Spirit raises up holy souls and inspires them to lay the foundations, which it is subsequently the task of the Church to recognize and sanction. When a rule has sprung up under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and has received the approbation of the Church, it bears a twofold impress of its divine origin. God creates vocations in conformity with this rule, and calls certain souls to fulfil the tasks imposed by it for His glory. Souls thus called ought to conform to the rule, and to follow its guidance in order by its aid to accomplish the work assigned to them by God. Thus rules come into existence as they are needed by the growth of the Church, and men and women are called to do the work which they prescribe. Vocations correspond to the rules, and the rules to the requirements of the Church, and if only those who are called are ready to follow their vocation, the religious Order can discharge its functions perfectly.

But why are there so many different rules? Because there are many kinds of work to be done, and many varieties of men to accomplish them. The labour imposed by God varies with the requirements of the Church, for the Church of God is a living body, developing in the world, and, as it grows, it needs many varieties of workers and of work, differing in accordance with times and places. Moreover, among mankind, there are innumerable types of disposition, temperament, and character. The rules of the

religious Orders correspond on the one hand to the general needs of the Church, which they aim at supplying, and, on the other hand, to the special requirements of the souls which they have to form. Each rule is adapted to secure the performance of some definite part of the work to be done in God's service, and, at the same time, it contains the method of training workers for doing it.

The active Orders have not the same object and so cannot have the same rules as the contemplative Orders, and each active Order has its rule suited to the special purpose for which it exists. Different rules are obviously necessary for Orders having such widely different objects as teaching, nursing the sick, doing works of charity, giving missions, caring for the aged, the young, and the working classes, and preaching. Among the contemplative Orders, the conditions vary according to sex, national customs, social surroundings, public requirements, the state of the Church, etc.

Let us begin by considering a religious rule as specifying the nature, extent and duration of the work to be done for God. From this aspect there is no difficulty in seeing how closely the rule and the vows are connected. They cannot, in fact, be separated, they belong together, and each supplies the interpretation and the completion of the other. To pledge oneself to serve God is not enough; one must also know the extent of the service that is to be rendered. Therefore the religious takes his vows according to the limi-

tations and conditions imposed by the rule which he professes. The special conditions of work prescribed by the rule cause considerable modifications in the obligations of the vows. For instance, in different Orders very various interpretations are given to the vows of poverty and obedience, in some they are more stringent, in others less so. Even the vow of chastity, which in itself admits of no modifications, is fenced about by more or less severe restrictions, such as by enclosure. The other additional vows vary of course according to the rule to which they belong.

Vocation, rule and religious Order all alike, point to the existence of some definite task to be performed for God, and of men set apart to perform it.

As St. Paul says, there are diversities of graces,* diversities of ministries, and diversities of operations, for such is the usual condition of organic life. "If," continues the Apostle, "the whole body were the eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? . . . and if all the members were one member, where would be the body?"†

* *Divisiones vero gratiarum sunt . . . et divisiones ministrarionum sunt . . . et divisiones operationum sunt (1 Cor. xii. 4).*

† *Si totum oculus, ubi auditus? Si totum auditus, ubi odoratus! Quod si essent omnia unum membrum, ubi corpus? (Ibid. 17, 19).*

In every organism there are many functions to be discharged, and there is a special organ for the discharge of each function, and the task assigned to each organ is to discharge its own peculiar function by each organ. The eye is made for sight, and only for sight, the ear for hearing, the feet for walking. The perfection of the organism as a whole consists in the best possible performance of its particular function by each organ. When the sight is clear, the hearing keen and the feet firm, when all the organs of nutrition and relation act duly, each according to the task assigned it, then the body is in perfect health and vigour.

The same is true of the Church, the body of Christ.*

It has many members, but one body,† and each of its members finds the laws governing his work in the special rules of his vocation, so that each religious regards his rule as the peculiar and complete law regulating the duty assigned to him in the body of Christ. Each ought to persevere in the particular vocation to which he is called,‡ and to follow the prescriptions of his rule, without thinking of doing anything beyond what it en-

* Et ipsum dedit caput supra omnem Ecclesiam, quæ est corpus ipsius (Eph. i. 22, 23).

† Nunc autem multa quidem membra, unum autem corpus (1 Cor. xii. 20).

‡ Unusquisque in qua vocatione vocatus est, in ea permaneat (*Ibid.* vii. 20).

joins. As the eye does not strive to hear, nor the ear to see, so the religious ought to aim at nothing beyond his vocation and his rule. If God grants different vocations and rules, it is in order that His work may be better done through being divided, and the accomplishment of each part secures the perfection of the whole.

By assigning to the highest vocations their part in the great work of building up souls in Christ, the rule is a priceless guarantee of vitality both to the individual religious and to the Church. A soul thus called ought to love the rule, cling to it loyally, follow it generously, yield to its demands and conform to it on all points. A religious is only of value owing to his rule, he is what he is, through it and in it ; and without it, he is nothing. Through it he becomes a useful member of the body of Christ ; without it he is only worthless and atrophied. Through it he is called to do great things and does them ; without it he can but harm both himself and the Church. Through it he makes the most of the resources for life given to him, since the very fact of his vocation develops his faculties and employs them on the lines prescribed by the rule. Through it he serves the Church in the way that she requires of him, for the fact of his vocation and the form of his rule correspond exactly to the present needs of the Church. Thus the rule is precious both to the Church and to the religious ; to the former, because it secures the performance of the work necessary

to her welfare ; to the latter, because it supplies him with the conditions of work in conformity to his vocation. These are the reasons why the Church regards the rules of the religious life with such watchful care, and why the religious loves his rule so ardently.

X.—The Mould in which the Religious is Cast.

As we have seen, the rule does not only prescribe the nature of the work to be done, but it states how the worker is to be formed.

St. Thomas says that every agent acts in virtue of its form; fire burns, water washes, light shines. A seal reproduces the impression that it bears and no other; a mould intended to produce one thing, cannot give rise to something different. “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?”*

God prepares for Himself souls destined to promote His glory, and gives them a mould in which they can assume the particular form required for doing the work that He wishes.

When He gives a definite vocation to any soul, it is that it may act in some particular manner, and produce some particular beneficial result, and take part in a particular way and degree in the great work of promoting God’s glory, not that it may act at random. This is the meaning of a religious vocation, or there is none at all.

If a soul is ready to comply with God’s suggestion, it must cast itself into His mould, to acquire

* Numquid colligunt de spinis uvas, aut de tribulis ficus? (Matt. vii. 16).

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the form in virtue of which it is to act, and without which all its actions would be aimless and unprofitable. When a shopkeeper wants statues of the Blessed Virgin, it is not to the purpose that the warehouse should supply him with those of St. Joseph, which he does not require at that moment. Still less does he want ugly caricatures, when he has ordered carefully finished figures. In the same way, when God asks one piece of work, He is not satisfied with another. If it were lawful for souls to adopt any form that they chose, and to change the form at will, and to act according to their own fancy, there would be no vocation at all.

But there is a vocation ; and there is a mould to impress the due form upon it, and, in the case of a religious vocation, the rule is this mould. It is of primary importance that a soul should alter nothing in the divine mould in which it is to be cast, should neither diminish nor add anything, but become plastic, and comply as exactly as possible with the rule, so as to reproduce with all clearness and accuracy the stamp that God wishes it to bear.

God has no use for distorted objects, so that if He takes such care in preparing the rules which are to impress their form upon souls called to His service, if He displays His providence so marvellously in this respect, is it not sad to see a soul made and formed by God's hands,* seeking

* Manus tuæ fecerunt me et plasmaverunt me (Ps. cxviii. 73).

to break the mould for which it has been prepared, or submitting itself only partially to it, so as to receive merely a bad impression? Or so to tamper with the mould as to obtain good and spurious impressions intermingled? Every agent acts in virtue of its form.

A religious will realize his full vocation only in as far as he takes the stamp of his rule. Those who do so partially, those who are neither one thing nor the other, are not worthy of the name of religious, they are monstrosities and stumbling-blocks; but true religious, who have faith in God's power to mould them according to His Will, offer no resistance to their rule, but strive to be true to it in every detail, and these are His masterpieces. Acting in accordance with the form that they have adopted, they have an incalculable power for good, being truly instruments of God, and whilst retaining the impress that they have received, they communicate it to others, and as long as it pleases God to make use of them to effect a restoration of the Christian life, they continue to serve Him without deterioration. Happy, indeed, are the holy souls which have a divine vocation! How careful they should be to prove themselves worthy of God's call!*

Faith is dying out, and the traces of its divine origin are being obliterated in the human soul. God needs finely-moulded and nobly-tempered

* Ut digne ambuletis vocatione qua vocati estis (Eph. iv. 1)

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characters to re-construct what has become disfigured. He has chosen you and desires to make you His instruments, and will you refuse what He asks? Will you not consent to be fashioned according to His designs and pleasure? Will you not be all that He expects of you?

I implore you, do not force God to put up with a misshapen model of what He desires to see in you. In God's Name and for His glory, for the welfare and life of the Church, for the salvation of souls, and for the perfecting of your own being, suffer the divine Artist to take possession of you, let Him fashion the clay and model the statue. Give yourselves up to Him, putting no hindrances in His way. Cast yourselves into the mould which He has prepared for you, and for which He has prepared you. You, who have heard the call to the religious state, accept your rule and live by it, and you will see life becoming vigorous and fruitful within you, faith reviving by your aid, God's glory triumphing, the Church developing, and souls saved through your agency.

It will be well to examine more closely this holy mould which is called the rule of the religious life, so as to give at least a general outline of it, and to show those called to embrace this life, that which will best suit them. This is not the place to discuss the rules and aims of the active life, but we must see what is the essence of the work and rules of the contemplative life.

XI.—Contemplation.

IN the first place we must consider what the contemplative life is, and what is meant by contemplation. We have already seen that the former is the ministry of divine union. Union with God, and with Him alone is the aim of contemplation. In heaven all the elect will share in contemplation, for all will delight in the beatific vision, and in the love of God's eternal splendour and goodness, and they will glory in these alone. Thus all the predestined will be contemplatives.

But here below, necessities arising out of our sojourn in this world and our passage to the next constrain the Church to regard the earth on which her children are still wayfarers ; although she does not lose sight of God towards whom they are directing their steps. Those who are forced to consider the world and to supply the things necessary for the journey through it, have an active vocation. Those who centre their thoughts on God, and reveal to others the goal at which they ought to aim, have a contemplative vocation. The contemplative state is therefore a mode of life which rivets on God a man's eyes, heart and hands ; his eyes to behold Him, his heart to love Him, his hands to serve Him. The contemplative busies himself exclusively about God, and

feeds on Him, and, so far as the circumstances of our earthly life allow, he lays aside all other occupations and interests.

His mind is fixed on the consideration of the mysteries of God, and his eye searches out the secrets of heaven. He still sees the earth, for he is still a traveller on its surface, but as he passes on amidst the creatures of this world, he watches ever for tokens of God's presence. He finds rest and satisfaction only in what speaks to him of God and reveals God to him ; he beholds the things of this world as in a mirror, and considers the enigmas of this life which he sees in a glass darkly, but he longs for the reflexion of what he hopes to contemplate face to face in the bright light of eternity.*

His heart also is set upon the one sole object of unchanging love. To love God, to grow in this love, to strive with all his might to embrace this supreme goodness and to be united to it and find all his delight in it ; to practice the highest act to which a creature can rise, to aim at the state of pure love, the climax of our supernatural life ; these are the objects towards which all his affective powers converge.

All his strength he reserves for God,† to be expended in His worship and service. He consecrates his voice and the labour of his hands to

* Videmus nunc per speculum, in ænigmate, tunc autem facie ad faciem (1 Cor. xiii. 12).

† Fortitudinem meam ad te custodiam (Ps. lviii. 10).

singing God's praises, honouring His festivals, adorning His altars and increasing the beauty of His worship. His lifework is to honour God, he is pre-eminently religious, since the special object of religion is to worship God.

In this way his whole being is concerned with God and united with Him, and in order that this may be so, he must cut himself off from other occupations and abandon other interests. He must cut himself off from the world and worldly things, and abandon the earth and its attractions. Thus separated in body, mind and heart he has left all that might have been a hindrance to him in his quest of God. Day by day he practises more complete renunciation to arrive at more perfect union. His penitential exercises tend to detachment, and prayer tends to union. This then is his life. It is made up of detachment and union ; Detachment from men and union with God. He is far from men, and near to God, and yet he is near to God for the sake of men who are far from Him. He lives apart from the interests of men and shares in those of God, that he may impart some share in the divine life to men. He rises from earth towards heaven, in order to turn the current of men's thoughts thither.

What then is the contemplative state ?

We must distinguish the interior, private and personal condition of a soul given up to union with God, from the exterior, public and official condition of an institution intended to aid contemplative

vocations. The interior and personal state of contemplation is attained by a soul, when its faculties and life collectively are cut off from earth, and set upon God, as we have just seen. When by the practice of penance, a man has succeeded in severing himself from creatures, and by prayer has attached himself to God, so that divine truths become the habitual nourishment of his mind, divine love the ruling passion of his heart and the service of God the one sole employment of his strength; when union with God delights and absorbs him, transforming all his faculties and tendencies, all his actions and habits; when he is prompt to follow the working of God's Holy Spirit and to correspond to Its light, heat and force; when he is indifferent to both the allurements and the perils of this world, and, having gradually shaken off its bonds, has fixed his thoughts on eternity; then indeed his soul has attained to the interior state of contemplation, and does so more or less thoroughly, according as the mystery of union with God operates within him more or less freely.

penance
prayer
&
pract

The exterior, public and official state of contemplation is realized in institutions established to supply those called to embrace this life with the means and surroundings conducive to the fulfilment of this aim. The whole purpose of the organization of the contemplative Orders is to help souls to attain to detachment and union. The former is effected by various works of penance,

whilst the divers practices of prayer promote union. The enclosure, the habit, silence, fasting, abstinence, vigils, disciplines, chastity, poverty and obedience all lay hold of the religious, isolate him, separate and detach him from all outward things and even from himself. The Divine Office, Holy Mass, mental prayer, examination of conscience, reading, exhortations, devotions, pious practices of every kind occupy his soul at almost every moment, so as to lead it upwards to God.

This two-fold aim is ever kept in view, and a man who submits to this discipline of prayer and penance, puts himself in the state of contemplation. This does not mean of course that all who enter upon the life succeed in attaining to contemplation. Not all the sick people who follow a certain course of treatment are cured, and many of the religious who submit to what may be called the contemplative régime are far from attaining to complete separation from the world and perfect union with God.

Modern science establishes what are called "sanatoria" on snow-clad peaks, where the air is pure, the sun shines brightly, the cold acts as a tonic and the stillness is soothing. In such places patients otherwise incurable recover strength and health, but not all; some go there too late and others cannot follow the rules laid down. Many centuries have gone by since God first established His sanatoria, far from men and the foul air of crowded cities. In the cloisters, the atmosphere

is pure, the light of truth shines brightly, the exercises of religion make the heart glow with health, and solitude soothes and calms.

O God, I beseech Thee, call to these houses, erected in Thine honour, men willing to submit to the rules in force there, and able to prepare themselves there for the glories of the divine life. Establish, revive and multiply these holy dwellings, where morbid souls may recover full health in the open air of heaven.

XII.—The Desert.

IN all ages whoever has desired to draw near to God, has withdrawn from mankind, because men are far from God, and so the quest of things divine has always led contemplative souls into the desert. Penance involves separation and so does prayer; separation from what is created, earthly and human. The difficulty for us is that our whole being cleaves to the earth;* it is only by breaking the bonds that hinder it that the bird can regain the free use of its wings.†

Monks have repeatedly transformed deserts into populous places, partly because of the great number of their monasteries, and partly because the people whom they had left followed them, seeking the assistance of their prayers and the shelter of their walls. The monks had fled from the degradation and darkness of the world, and crowds followed them to share in the purity and light that they enjoyed. In this way the fashionable haunts of the pagan world lost their inhabitants and settlements were formed that developed into Christian cities. Many towns

* Quoniam humiliata est in pulvere anima nostra, conglutinatus est in terra venter noster (Ps. xliii. 25).

† Laqueus contritus est, et nos liberati sumus (Ps. cxxiii. 7).

still flourishing owe their origin to some monastery founded in what was once a desert. It was inevitable that this should be the case. Amidst the winter's cold, wherever a fire blazes, the comfort of its heat draws round it those who wish to escape the freezing blasts, and societies are formed in similar fashion. O God, grant us many glowing fires, and round them Thine elect will surely throng !

In the desert the monastic life developed on two lines. The first time that Moses fled from Egypt, he spent forty years in the desert of Sinai, where he was destined afterwards to be the leader of his people for another forty years. He lived in the desert, feeding the flocks of Jethro, his father-in-law. We read, however, that at the time when God chose him to be the deliverer of His people, Moses was in the inner parts of the desert.*

Besides the desert, therefore, there were "inner parts of the desert" ; that is to say, in the desert it is possible to lead either a solitary life or life in community. These two kinds of life have always been led by monks ; some have been cenobites, living in community, and others have been hermits, living in isolation. Both these forms of the religious life were found in the deserts of the East and of the West alike. In the West, the Benedictines especially, practised life in community, whilst certain Augustinians preferred to

* Cumque minasset gregem ad interiora deserti (Exod. iii. 1).

live as hermits. For many centuries the two forms existed side by side and were clearly distinguished one from the other. Some religious adopted life in community as supplying the safeguard of mutual observation, the support of brotherly assistance, the encouragement of good example, wise counsels and helpful exhortations. Others had recourse to solitude with its spiritual calm, its absolute separation, and its power of concentration and union. Both forms of life have their advantages, but both have their drawbacks, for in this world we find good and evil intermingled everywhere. Religious living in community are exposed to bad examples, jealousies, rivalries, disputes and distractions; those in solitude to self-deception, over-excitement and degeneration.

The evils to which human nature is subject make their way and assert themselves even in regions where God should be the one sole object of men's thoughts. The various religious rules are marvels of wisdom, compiled to check or correct any excess of human frailty, but this frailty has again and again shown itself able to evade all rules.

Early in the eleventh century it occurred to St. Romuald that it might be possible to unite these two forms of life so that the advantages of each might compensate for the disadvantages of the other. He combined them in one rule, making one the continuation of the other. His religious begin by living in community during their period of training, until they are strong enough to endure

a solitary life. His monasteries, therefore, are composed of two parts, religious communities and solitaries. Men pass from the community to the desert, and may return thence, if a solitary life seems unsuited to them. This is the ideal of the Camaldolese, founded by St. Romuald in 1012.

Towards the close of the same century another saint attempted to combine the two forms of religious life by amalgamating them, so as to form a mixed life, passed half in common, half in solitude. This was St. Bruno, the founder of the Carthusians.

There are therefore four forms of the contemplative life; it may be passed in common or in solitude, or first in one and then in the other, or in a combination of both.

XIII.—Liturgical Prayer.

LIFE in community produces different surroundings and a different atmosphere from a solitary life ; but there are other differences arising from the work to be done. All the contemplative Orders are dedicated to prayer and penance, so that all have essentially the same occupation, but both prayer and penance can assume various forms, and they can be intermingled under various conditions. Hence arise the many shades of colour in the golden garment of the King's daughter.*

Liturgical prayer is peculiarly the monastic prayer, it is the monk's office, and his rule calls it his work par excellence, the work of God,† which must take precedence of every other duty. It regulates in fact his whole existence, for his days and nights, his weeks and years are ordered with a view to the Divine Office. Everything depends upon it. A religious rises and sleeps, comes and goes, works and rests, in accordance with the Divine Office, so that his whole existence, being governed by it, becomes truly liturgical.

The Divine Liturgy is the official and universal

* *Astitit regina a dextris tuis in vestitu deaurato circumdata varietate* (Ps. xlv. 10).

† *Operi Dei nihil præponere licet. Reg. monast.*

form of prayer sanctioned by the Church. It has one culminating point, a divine centre, about which are grouped the hours of the day and night. The holy sacrifice of the Mass is the vital centre of the whole liturgy, every part of which is connected with it, so as to form one whole of wonderful completeness. It is a unique and living whole, filled with unity and life. How far removed from the stately dignity of the Divine Office are those petty devotions which attract little souls with trifling emotions, and which are limited to fragmentary ideas, and express merely passing feelings!

Jesus Christ yesterday and to-day, and the same for ever.* This threefold existence of Christ constitutes the living element in the liturgy; Christ in the ages before the Incarnation, Christ in His mortal life amidst mankind, and Christ in the Church for ever. In the cycle of the liturgical year, in both Mass and Office, we have the words and events that preceded our Saviour's coming; our Divine Master's words and works in His life on earth, and the manifestations of His mystical life in the Church and in His saints. Both these mysteries and their setting are full of beauty, for the liturgical setting is indeed worthy of the picture that it contains.

All is replete with life. On the altar our Lord, in the reality of His Eucharistic presence, reproduces the mysteries of His death. He is there in

* *Jesus Christus heri et hodie, ipse et in sæcula* (Heb. xiii. 8).

person, living and acting, offering Himself under the veil of the sacred rites. The parts of the Office preceding and following the Mass are, as it were, on the one hand a Messianic preparation for it, and on the other a Christian continuation of it. The psalms and lessons, the versicles and responses, in which the essence of Holy Scripture seems to be concentrated, are like a living procession going before the Mass, for the word of God is living,* it is the word of life.†

In the course of the liturgical year, we have unfolded to our gaze in lively succession the mysteries preceding our Lord's coming, His birth and childhood, His hidden and His public life, His Passion and Death, His Resurrection and Ascension, the sending of the Holy Ghost, and the life of the Church until the day of judgment. Within this picture of our Lord's life, the lives of the saints, in whom Christ manifests Himself, appear like pearls strewn on a background of gold, or rather like brilliant sparks proceeding from a central fire.

All these things are expressed in the language of God; the words are the words of God, the thoughts are His, and the ideas are His. All is purely divine. Great is the power to rise on high and to intercede for others imparted to the soul accustomed to this form of prayer, and able to

* *Vivus est enim sermo Dei et efficax* (Heb. iv. 12).

† *Verba quæ ego locutus sum vobis spiritus et vita sunt* (Joan vi. 64).

appropriate these words, thoughts and feelings. And how could it be otherwise? Must not a soul, eager for union with God, inevitably be lifted up and transported to Him by such a daily and nightly consideration of the mysteries of God told in such divine language? If the material supplied for prayer is exclusively divine, must not the soul's thoughts and feelings be assimilated to those of God? By means of this liturgical prayer the great contemplative saints rose to their wonderful union with God ; through it God entered into them and they into God.

When a soul lives in God, it has marvellous influence with Him, and its supplications acquire supreme efficacy. Moses averted God's wrath from His people, and the intercession of the saints is no less mighty ; they alone may suffice to secure the salvation of nations. A contemplative, being filled with the spirit of God, sheds abroad the light of truth and the beauty of goodness, for his words, actions, bearing and gestures all bear the impress of what is divine. He seems as it were constantly to exhale something that by its fragrance reminds men of God. He is the flower, emitting the good odour of God.* Wherever holy souls, exhaling this fragrance, are placed, even in the chilly atmosphere of a population that has lost the faith, strayed from God, and sunk in wickedness ; the light of truth and the beauty of

* *Christi bonus odor sumus* (2 Cor. ii. 15).

virtue are quickly imparted to those around, they run to and fro like sparks among the reeds.*

Would to God that monasteries were more numerous and filled with more fervent religious ! They would be centres of fervour, deriving their heat from the liturgical prayer, and spreading around them their holy influence ! Would to God that devoted hearts knew, understood and realized what they might accomplish !

O God ! Give us more monasteries and more saints !

* *Fulgebunt justi et tanquam scintillæ in arundinetis discurrent* (Sap. iii. 7).

XIV.—Perpetual Intercession.

THE Divine Office is distributed over the twenty four hours in such a way as to form the framework of all the day's occupations, and in the various contemplative Orders it is so arranged that there is never a moment, day or night, when the praises of God and prayers for His mercy are not being offered before a tabernacle. A monk regards his Office as the centre of his occupations ; he comes to it by day and by night. When he interrupts it in order to apply himself to the penitential labour which forms the second part of his vocation, or to renew his strength by taking rest as stern necessity requires, he comes back as soon as he is able to the Office, his great work in God's service. Seven or eight times each day he offers God the homage due to Him ;* he feels that the duty of perpetual intercession has been laid upon him, and he makes it a point of honour not to cast aside the burden imposed upon him by his vocation.

In different Orders the Office is said at various hours. In some it continues far into the night, in others it is begun at midnight, in others, again, very early in the morning. They are, as it were, sentries, relieving one another in their divine task

* *Septies in die laudem dixi tibi, super iudicia justitiæ tuæ* (Ps. cxviii. 164).

of prayer, and never ceasing to keep guard over the spiritual welfare of the nations. It is the same by day as by night. Never is there any intermission in the praise, worship and reparation offered to God. From every monastery rises an unbroken cry for mercy, and the words of the Office afford joy to heaven and comfort to earth ; they rise from earth to heaven, and there are heavenly voices re-echoing them to the earth. God and men hear them ; God hears them as the purest sounds ascending to Him from earth ; men hear them as the echoes of the music of heaven.

This is the twofold characteristic of plain-chant, in its gravity and sweetness, its calm and dignity, it belongs both to earth and heaven, it is an appeal and a prayer. Anyone who visits a cloister, and sees the quiet, silent figures of the monks, passing like shadows under the arches of their living tomb, may well feel inclined to regard them as spirits. But let us follow them to the church. After a few moments of silent recollection, the slow and plaintive chant is heard, and the notes fall in an apparently monotonous but wonderfully attractive modulation. For long hours these doves of the sanctuary will make plaintive song before the tabernacle, expressing to God the desires of men, and to men the wishes of God. If now and then the words chanted catch your ear, you will realize how they give utterance both to God's majesty and man's misery, and you will understand why true monks

are large-hearted men. As the chant proceeds slowly, a particle of what is divine penetrates the soul, and the cry of humanity rises to the ear of God, and a wonderful force of elevation and intercession is revealed. The human soul is felt to be brought into the closest possible relation with its God. Like a nightingale, it never wearies of its song; for three full hours note follows note, slow and solemn but nevertheless sweet and joyous, and at the end, when all is over, the monks' faces are radiant, their bodies full of energy, their hearts at peace; they seem to be leaving some joyful festival. After an interval of barely three hours, with the same calm joy and serious zeal they return to resume their Office. God and man are again face to face, and again in the notes of the chant may be heard the voices of men and the echoes of heaven. Such is the life of a monk.

Go forth into the world where men unconsciously crave for the things of God, and tell them where and how God may be found and man loved. No divine secret, no human interest is unknown to the monk, though he may seem debarred from both. He can enter into them, and lays before God the interests of this world, bringing back to man the secrets of God. He stands thus between God and man, known always to God, though often unknown to man, and his heart is large enough to contain the miseries of humanity that it is his task to lay before God, and the mercies of God that he has to convey to the world. He knows that

though the miseries of men are boundless, the mercies of God are still more infinite, and his vocation requires of him to be the channel of communication between these two vast oceans.

He prays by day and by night ; his prayer is interrupted with regret and resumed with fresh persistency. Listen to this prayer, and you will understand the reality of this interchange of the human and the divine, which goes on in the cloister. You will then perhaps comprehend why sectarian hell-blown hatred makes such constant and such embittered attempts to ruin and destroy the monastic life.

XV.—Monastic Penance.

PRAYER and penance are the two wings given to a monk, whereby he may quit the earth and soar towards heaven. In both alike he regards God and man. First God, whom he must honour and to whom he must make reparation; and then man, whom he must purify and sanctify. By prayer he gives glory to God, and by penance, he does reparation, but prayer and penance have the further aim of sanctifying and purifying man. These are the reasons why a monk spends his life in prayer and mortification; he dedicates himself to God and mankind, interceding and doing reparation for man with God.

All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth;* the ways, that is to say, by which He comes to man and leads back man to Himself. Mercy bestows gifts and graces, whilst justice weighs merits and faults, and the mercy which gives must be prayed for, and the justice which weighs must be paid. God wishes us to pray for His mercy and to prevent His justice by acts of reparation. Man's poverty needs the gifts of divine mercy, and his sins call for justice. His

* *Universæ viæ Domini, misericordia et veritas* (Ps. xxiv. 10).

poverty prompts him to pray, and his iniquity to make reparation.

Jesus Christ is always living to make intercession for us* with God's sovereign mercy, and He is also always dying on the altar for us, to satisfy God's infinite justice. A monk who passes his life near a tabernacle, every day mingles a little drop of the water of his own sacrifice with the wine of our Redeemer's offering, so as to fill up in his flesh those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ for His Body, which is the Church.†

Iniquity abounds day by day, and the religious cuts himself off from the sinful world in order to go with confidence to the throne of grace, that he may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid,‡ and that where sin abounded, grace may yet more abound.§

He offers himself as a victim beside and with Jesus, first as a holocaust, the sacrifice made in honour of God, happy to pay his Lord the vows

* Semper vivens ad interpellandum pro nobis (Heb. vii. 25).

† Adimpleo ea quæ desunt passionum Christi in carne mea pro corpore ejus quod est Ecclesia (Col. i. 24).

‡ Adeamus ergo cum fiducia ad thronum gratiæ, ut misericordiam consequamur, et gratiam inveniamus in auxilio opportuno (Heb. iv. 16).

§ Ubi autem abundavit delictum, superabundavit gratia (Rom. v. 20).

that his lips have uttered ;* and he is, moreover, a peace-offering, a sacrifice for sin, happy to share the work of the Lamb, who taketh away the sin of the world.†

And what are the sufferings that he offers to God with Jesus Christ? In the first place the separations and the submission imposed by his vows. As we saw in Chapter VIII., he breaks the bonds of kindred, and gives up all connection with the world, renouncing its amusements and the enjoyment of wealth and the caprices of independence.

In the second place there are works of penance imposed by his rule; enclosure and silence, a hard bed and rising during the night, hair-shirts and disciplines, prolonged and sometimes perpetual abstinence, frequent fasts, spiritual, intellectual or manual labour. Different Orders have different forms of penance varying in proportion according to their special aims.

Lastly there are sufferings sent by Providence, those which our Divine Master is wont to lay upon souls that have resolved to refuse Him nothing. Among these may be reckoned ordinary hardships due to heat or cold, accidents or sickness, disappointments and humiliations. Besides these there are extraordinary trials interior crosses,

* Introibo in domum tuam in holocaustis, reddam tibi vota mea, quæ distinxerunt labia mea (Ps. lxxv. 13).

† Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccatum mundi (Joan i. 29).

spiritual desolation, anguish of heart and darkness of spirit.

A religious accepts all these crosses in proportion as his vocation lays them upon him. He welcomes them and bears them joyfully, following the example of his Saviour and with Him.*

He accepts, I say, the crosses which belong to his vocation, all, without exception, but no others, for those belonging to his vocation are laid upon him by God, and are themselves divine and possess a divine virtue. They come to him from God through his rule and through circumstances, and therefore they are welcomed by the religious, who distrusts self-chosen mortifications as having but a human virtue, destroying what is human without implanting within him the life of God. Mortifications sent by God are wonderfully adapted to uproot the wickedness of man and to restore God's work. They are remedies applied with so much discrimination that they affect the inmost parts of a man's being, and remove the last traces of evil, rendering all the faculties healthy, and reviving their purity and early vigour. This is why a religious believes in the efficacy of these mortifications and has recourse to them, and this too is why he avoids all others.

* *Curramus ad propositum nobis certamen, aspicientes in auctorem fidei et consummatorem Jesum, qui proposito sibi gaudio, sustinuit crucem, confusione contempta (Heb. xii. 1).*

XVI.—The Sweetness of the Yoke.

THE severity of monastic penances surprises those who are not Christians ; it fills cowardly souls with fear, but it attracts generous hearts. To non-Christians the idea of penance is incomprehensible ; cowards understand but fear it ; others both understand and love it ; though these will always be in the minority.

Yet does the world offer nothing but joys to its children ? Is life a rose without thorns ? Alas ! there are more thorns than roses, and the lamentations of those whose hearts are torn by the thorns are far more frequently heard than the joyful songs of those whose existence is crowned with roses. No, the world is not so beautiful as it seems, its yoke is sadly heavy and the burden of its labour is terribly wearisome. Knowing this, our Saviour calls us, saying : “ Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke upon you and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls, for my yoke is sweet and my burden light.” *

* Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos. Tollite jugum meum super vos, et discite a me, quia mitis sum et humilis corde, et invenietis requiem animabus vestris. Jugum enim meum suave est et onus meum leve (Matt. xi. 28-30.).

In the world there are roses on the surface and thorns beneath ; oil on the outside and vinegar within ; appearances are fair but the realities are terrible. In religion the thorns are outside and the fruit within ; the vinegar is on the surface, and the oil beneath ; appearances are alarming, but the realities are full of sweetness. If we would love them, we must look at the world from outside and at religion from within. Superficial characters remain in the world which they love while it disappoints them ; those who see below the surface enter religion.

In so doing they feel how human bonds are broken, but they are not slow to taste the sweetness of God's service. This sweetness is three-fold. There is first a sensation of detachment, freedom and strength, which is extremely delightful. The soul perceives how mortification releases it from the tyranny of creatures ; it is delivered from many forms of bondage, and no one realizes how oppressive this bondage has been, until he is released from it, and his mind, heart and senses recover strength, ease, freedom and independence in a degree astonishing even to himself. His body is set free from many obligations, his heart from wearisome ties and his mind from its fetters. Well may a man desire to taste this freedom, even at the cost of some suffering.

In the second place the soul experiences the still sweeter consolation of being an instrument of reparation for the world. Generous hearts know

this well, and there are few greater joys than that of bringing help to others. Does the consoler or the consoled feel the truer happiness? When a religious practices mortifications, he feels that he is doing a work of consolation and reparation ; he realizes the benefit and efficacy of his sacrifices ; he knows how many souls are healed, comforted and encouraged by the remedies prepared in the crucible of his sacrifice. How, then, can he fail to experience the supreme joy of doing good? Men engaged in the active ministry may distribute and apply these remedies, but the religious prepares them, with his tears and prayers, and should he neglect his task, there would no longer be an abundance of these divine remedies, and then what desolation would result. But this will never happen as long as the happiness of religious consists in supplying them. O God, multiply the houses where these divine remedies are prepared, and multiply those who prepare them. There are so many sick needing their aid.

Finally, the supreme happiness, passing all comprehension, is that a monk knows, when he sacrifices himself, that he is consoling the heart of God. He makes reparation for injuries inflicted, and God shows him deep gratitude in return. If it is sweet to comfort a fellow-creature, what must it be to comfort God? In this lies the intensity of the Christian beatitudes. Blessed are the poor, the meek, the sorrowful ; blessed are those that hunger and thirst after justice ; blessed

are the merciful, the clean of heart, peacemakers, and those that suffer persecution, reviling and calumny, great is their reward, both on earth and in heaven.*

Unspeakable is the joy of making reparation to God's honour, of satisfying His justice, of giving pleasure to His eyes and heart, and of seeing Him pour forth in return an infinite wealth of ineffable sweetness. None can realize this joy, who has not tasted it, and none can taste it, who has not suffered something for God. No created joy can afford any idea of the happiness of suffering. No, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him.†

Happy is the monk whose life of penance is one long beatitude ! When suffering has become joy to a man, there is nothing left for him to desire, and if suffering is joy, what will joy itself be ? Beatitude ! Beatitude !

*St. Matthew v. 3-12.

† *Oculus non vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascendit, quæ præparavit Deus ūs qui diligunt illum* (1 Cor. ii. 9).

XVII.—The Observances and the Spirit of the Religious Life.

HUMAN institutions are like human beings in possessing life, and in having a soul and a body.

The spirit of prayer and penance is the soul of the contemplative life, the rule and the vows are its body. Moreover, each man has, both in his soul and body, some specific characteristics of human nature that are common to all, and other peculiar personal qualities that belong to him personally, and differ in each case. The same is true of institutions.

Hitherto we have been considering the specific characteristics common to all the contemplative Orders; we must now pass on to the individual features of at least a few of the Orders existing in our midst, as a glorious inheritance of a noble past. Though they are all too few, there are still some who continue the ministry of intercession and expiation, and we could not dispense with them, for their prayer opens a way for the rays of God's light to penetrate the darkness of the world, and their penances supply a little salt to preserve us from the corrupting influence of earth.*

* Vos estis sal terræ. . . . Vos estis lux mundi (Matt. v. 13).

We must ask what are the characteristics of these Orders both in body and soul, or, in other words, what are the peculiar conditions of their spirit and life. Each has its own special observances, which form, as it were, its body ; and each has its own spirit, giving life to these observances. In order to understand the life, task and advantages of any Order, we must consider the nature of its observances and characteristics of its spirit. I shall do my best to keep these significant aspects in view, so as to reveal them clearly to souls in search of a guide to their steps, but it will not be possible, in a mere sketch, to bring out fully the living beauty of each Order. I am confident, however, that a bare outline will suffice to suggest to souls of good will the path that they ought to follow, and to give them useful indications and to encourage them to penetrate fully into the hidden purpose of their life.

It is no part of my plan to give an account of the actual state of all the Orders and congregations, practising the contemplative life ; I am not concerned with statistics, but wish only to supply a few illustrations and indications. I propose therefore, to speak of three only of the best known Orders for men, and of three for women, viz., of the Benedictines, Carthusians and Trappists, for men, and of the Carmelites, Poor Clares and the Visitation Order for women.

XVIII.—The Benedictines.

THEIR SPIRIT.

THE first contemplative Order, first both in time and in importance, is the Benedictine, which has deserved beyond all others the name of the Monks of the West. For thirteen centuries the sons of the great patriarch of Monte Cassino have preserved the monastic spirit in its purity, working for the honour of God, and producing abundant fruits of holiness and glory for the Church. St. Benedict was noted for his zeal in the celebration of the Divine Office and for his devotion to the Roman Church, and his sons, inheriting his spirit, have always been famous in their twofold capacity; they are faithful guardians of traditional truth in liturgical observances and in the defence of the Church. When the French congregation was revived, the Sovereign Pontiff referred to this glorious past in reminding the monks that their mission was to restore the sound traditions of pontifical law and of the holy liturgy from the decay into which they had fallen.*

Benedictines are, by tradition, men of the Church and of God. They are champions of the Church, maintaining her ideas, authority and influence; they are champions of God, upholding

* *Sanas pontificii juris et sacræ liturgiæ traditiones labescentes confovere.*

His worship, Name and Glory. A Benedictine monastery is a centre where the burning love of God and His Church is cherished and whence it is diffused.

The Benedictines enjoy the ancient privilege of being exempted from the ordinary jurisdiction of the bishop, and of standing under the immediate and special authority of the Holy See.

This particular favour and exceptional position was granted because the spirit of the Church, being protected by the rule, lives most intensely in the monasteries. Sound traditions, pure doctrines, fertile initiatives flourish especially there, and wherever monasteries are established dependent upon the Holy See and devoted to it, the Supreme Pontiff seems to be present, for he is there in his aims and influence, which are guarded as in a safe stronghold, and make themselves felt like rays issuing from a glowing fire.

There they are safe, for a monastery is the home of doctrine, and monks, being men devoted to contemplation, are most familiar with divine truth, seeking and finding it both in their prayers and studies. More completely perhaps than any other human being does a Benedictine monk pass his life in constant pursuit of truth; it is his great object, the chosen food of his mind, and thus to the Benedictine monasteries has always belonged the great glory of being sacred storehouses of doctrine, which is preserved in them and spread abroad from them.

Everyone knows what light has been cast upon the world by great Benedictines such as St. Gregory the Great, St. Peter Damian, and St. Anselm, and what influence and fame the monastic schools once enjoyed. The monks have always been so noted for their attainments, that the very name Benedictine suggests an indefatigable worker and an eminent scholar.

Is it then an integral part of a Benedictine vocation to be a writer? By no means. There is one thing essential to this vocation, one characteristic feature of it, and this is a passionate love of truth, love of the Church, her life, doctrine, authority and rights. Whenever it becomes necessary to assert the truth, to defend the doctrines of the Church, to make men love the Church and her institutions, and to increase the influence and authority of the Holy See, then the Benedictine has something to write and to say, and he does so at the bidding of his superior, whose duty it is to assign their occupation to the monks. All the great works written by Benedictines, bear witness to their inward love of the Church and of truth.

It is not possible in so brief an account of the Order to mention by name even the chief works by which the different Benedictine congregations are honouring and defending the Church at the present time. We may, however, refer to their achievements with regard to the liturgy, plainchant, discipline, history, and art; these works

have been carried on as apostolic labours in France by the disciples of Dom Guéranger, in Germany, Belgium, and Brazil, by those of Fathers Wolter, Maurus, and Placidus respectively ; in England by the English monks ; in Spain by the monks of Montserrat and Silos, and in Italy, too, the members of the Order have been active. Does not this prove that the sacred stream flows as abundantly as of old ? The monastic tradition still lives in our midst ; the monks contemplate the truth, and, when there is need for it, they proclaim it to the world.

In this way the Benedictines are devoted to the Church and to the preservation of her doctrines, but they are pre-eminently devoted to God and to the maintenance of His worship. As M. Olier says, “ the aim of this Order is above all to give expression to the reverence paid by our Lord Jesus Christ to His Father, and the solemn homage which He offered to God here on earth and still offers Him in heaven. Hence this Order is stately and lavish in its beautiful ceremonies, which are far more solemn and imposing than those of any other religious body. It displays gorgeous ornaments, as so many types of the glory of heaven, and surrounds them with magnificence and many lights, which carry men’s thoughts back to the gorgeous sights described in the Apocalypse. The churches belonging to this Order are most stately ; their vast arches suggest the majesty of God, the solemn and harmonious chants with

which they re-echo, remind us of the harmony of angelic strains ; their great bells seem to vibrate in union with God's voice. It would be a vain task to seek this splendour and solemnity in the liturgical offices of other Orders, not having the same vocation.”*

“A monk,” says Cardinal Pie, “is essentially a man of prayer, and especially of that public and official prayer known as the Liturgical Office. When a brother is to be received, St. Benedict's first rule lays down that care must be taken to ascertain whether he really seeks God, and is zealous in His service.† Now the special work in which a monk is engaged in God's service is to chant His praises, and to render Him this tribute day and night before the altar on which the sacred mysteries are celebrated.”‡

The sacred liturgy may truly be called the centre of Benedictine life. From it the religious gains the knowledge and love of God, in it his own heart rises towards God in His infinity, and expands as he sings of God's truth and love.

* Manuscripts left by M. Olier.

† Si vere Deum quærit, et si sollicitus est ad opus Dei (Reg. S. Bened. c. 58).

‡ Dom Guéranger's funeral oration, p. 18.

XIX.—The Benedictines.

THEIR LIFE.

On several occasions in the course of the last few years attention has been drawn by the Holy See to the influence for good that the Benedictine Order can exert and is called to produce in the present state of society. Not only by the example and power of their prayer, but also by their monastic schools, by their literary researches and by being especially devoted to the study and practice of the sacred liturgy, the Benedictines are eminently qualified to become a bond of union between the schismatical churches and the centre of Catholic unity. When Leo XIII. approved the statutes and rules of the Benedictine congregations restored in the nineteenth century, he took into account the constitution and character of society at the present time, thus imitating the wisdom of St. Benedict, who, when writing his rule in the sixth century, introduced some modifications into the monastic life as it then existed in the East.

The monastic rule in itself is severe, and the mitigations sanctioned by the Holy See affect chiefly three points in it, viz.: perpetual abstinence from meat, the long fasts and the night office.

Several monasteries still adhere to perpetual abstinence, except in case of illness, and in others

the abstinence is strictly observed during Lent and Advent, and throughout the rest of the year there are three, four or five days of abstinence every week, according to the season and country.

The Benedictine rule prescribes fasting for eight months or more during the year, and in many monasteries it is still observed, with the exception of the greater festivals not occurring in Advent ; on these a dispensation is granted. In houses where the rule is less strictly kept, one, two or three days of each week are fast-days, over and above the ordinary fasts of the Church, except in the Paschal season.

Some monasteries in Italy, France and Belgium retain the old custom, and the monks rise all the year round at 1.30 a.m. in order to begin Matins at 2, taking a short rest after the Office. It is, however, more usual now to rise at 3.30, and begin mental prayer or Matins at 4 a.m., taking no more rest until 9 p.m., with the exception of a portion of the free time after dinner, varying in length in different seasons and countries.

The following is the ordinary distribution of the day's occupations :—

- 3.30 a.m., rise for Matins and Lauds, which are either preceded or followed by half-an-hour's mental prayer ; then low Masses.
- 7 a.m., Prime, Chapter or Conference, and breakfast.
- 9 a.m., Tierce, conventual Mass, Sext and None.

12 noon, dinner, recreation or rest for half-an-hour or a hour.

Between 2 and 4 p.m., Vespers.

7 p.m., Rosary, Way of the Cross, or other prayers peculiar to the Community ; supper or collation ; spiritual reading.

9 p.m., retire to rest.

Each monk devotes the remainder of his time to his own special work, in accordance with the orders given him by his superior.

Except in Advent and Lent, a walk is taken once or twice each week. Except during recreation and walks, conversation is forbidden, unless it be for motives of charity, of necessity, or in connexion with study, and then it may not exceed five minutes' duration. For a longer conversation, special leave must be obtained from the superior.

The Benedictine leads a mixed life, less isolated than the Carthusian, less in community than the Trappist. At the Office, at meals and at recreation, he is in community ; he is alone in his cell when doing his intellectual work and when at rest. He enjoys to a great extent the benefits of family life, but he is not subject to the burden of an uninterrupted existence in community.

According to the spirit of St. Benedict, the government of a Benedictine monastery is essentially that of a family. Each house is independent and complete in itself, and at its head is a religious, placed there for life, and bearing the

name of "father," for "abbot" is derived from a Hebrew word meaning father. Children are born to him, for the day of his religious profession is to a monk the day of his birth to the monastic life. The day and the place of his profession are those of his birth in religion, and to the end of his life he will belong to this house which is his own, and he will be a member of this family. With truth he gives the name of father to him whom God has appointed to rule this house, and that of brethren to those who, like himself born under this roof, are children of the same supernatural household. The vow of stability, taken at his profession, strengthens the family bonds and attaches the religious to his monastery, just as the other vows attach him to the religious life.

Benedictine houses are independent one of another, but are united by having a common rule and a common father, for all the monks are conscious of being the sons of St. Benedict and of having inherited his spirit.

When any common or particular necessity causes a Benedictine to pass from one abbey to another, he continues to be a member of the community where he was professed, unless indeed new ties take the place of the older ones and render him a member of the family to which he has been transferred.

This family spirit imparts their most striking feature to Benedictine monasteries; the rule of St. Benedict is permeated with it, we may almost

say that it is the most marked characteristic of the holy patriarch's genius. It is difficult to describe the influences that he has exerted thereby on Christendom, imparting to families that vigorous constitution which is the most powerful support of all social life, and preserving it in them.

Such is briefly an outline of the present conditions of Benedictine life. The Order exists all over the world, and is divided into fourteen congregations, varying in the details of their management and mode of life, and each having some observances peculiar to itself. These differences are an inevitable result of influences of race, surroundings and occupation, but they do not destroy the general family likeness, which remains common to all the congregations. In order to give them more cohesion and a greater power of harmonious expansion, Leo XIII. united them all under one Primate. The Benedictine Order seems therefore to have attained to full development. Lowest in the scale is the monastery, possessing the autonomy of a family; next above it is the congregation, in which the families, are grouped for their protection, over all is the Primate, upholding the congregations and uniting them with one another. Under this common head each congregation preserves its own customs, and within the congregation each family retains its own privileges; the whole forms one strong, vigorous unity, giving promise of abundant fruit.

XX.—The Carthusians.

LIFE IN SOLITUDE AND IN COMMUNITY.

As contemplatives, Carthusians are men dedicated to promoting the glory of God and the salvation of souls by the practice of prayer and penance; this is their generic character; but they practise prayer and penance in a form of life partly solitary and partly common, peculiar to themselves. The specific characteristic of the Carthusian life is therefore an intermingling of solitude with an existence in community.

There are three things which, according to the Carthusian rule, are assigned partly to the solitude of the cell and partly to community life, and these three things are connected with the nourishment of the mind, the heart and the body. A Carthusian shares with the other members of his community the mental nourishment derived from the long lessons in his Office, the reading at Chapter and in the refectory, the public counsels and exhortations, and the interchange of ideas during colloquies and spaciments.*

All meet at Chapter on Sundays and festivals, after Prime and after None, and on the same days there is a colloquy between None and Vespers, and

* Spaciment is the name by which the Carthusians designate the long walk that they take once a week.

once a week all take a walk together outside the monastery grounds. The religious have therefore fairly frequent opportunities of benefiting by an exchange of ideas in the course of conversation. The days when the monks are allowed to meet and converse on profitable subjects somewhat exceed a third of the whole year, so that the days of solitude preponderate.

Apart from these hours when conversation is permitted, strict silence prevails, and this is the point of discipline most rigorously observed, next to the vows themselves. In the silence of his cell a Carthusian seeks food for his mind in meditation and in reading the works of great saints. Shut off from every sound, at peace within and without, he enjoys a sweet intimacy with the saints and a familiarity with their thoughts which enrich, satisfy and raise his mind in a marvellous manner.

The Carthusian finds nourishment for his heart in community when he hears and celebrates Mass every day, for the conventual Mass is always sung, and each choir monk who is a priest enjoys the privilege of saying Mass daily. The night Office and Vespers of the day are regularly chanted in choir, but the Little Hours only on Sundays and festivals. On ferias the Office of the Dead is generally sung in choir.

Compline is invariably said by each monk in his own cell, so are the Little Hours, on days that are not festivals, occasionally the Office of the Dead, and every day without exception the Office of our

Lady, so that in his cell also he has an opportunity of communing alone with God in prayer.

On Sundays and festivals the Carthusian dines in the refectory, and thus nourishes his body in community, but on other days his meals are taken in his cell. At recreation and the weekly walk he is with his brethren, but he is usually alone at work ; each religious has a little garden and a small workshop with a lathe and a carpenter's bench.

In this way the Carthusian life is at once solitary and common, though solitude predominates, and is interrupted only when the obligations of community life summon a religious to join his brethren. Such opportunities for intercourse make a break in the solitary existence which remains the ordinary and normal feature of the Carthusian monasteries, and if the fragrance of a community life penetrates into the solitude of the cells, it does so like the incense at sacred ceremonies, which overpowers the foul air of the crowded churches and makes one think of the divine attractions, without however taking the place of the air with which it mingles so beneficially. Such is the part played by the common life in a Carthusian's existence ; he uses it as far as it is required to correct human deterioration and to taste more effectually the divine attractions, but his customary state is one of solitude.

XXI.—The Carthusians.

PRAYER AND PENANCE.

WE have seen how the life of a Carthusian is divided between solitude and the community, and we must now look at his prayers and penances.

He says three Offices, that of the day, that of our Lady and that of the Dead, these are his three great devotions. In the Office of the day and at Holy Mass, the ritual and chants have preserved their ancient sobriety and quiet simplicity, and possess a calm dignity and slow plaintiveness becoming both to the monk's faith and to the majesty of God. Nothing has been introduced which could savour of any theatrical or sentimental novelty; there are no noisy bursts of instrumental music, which is forbidden to be used. The Carthusians still adhere to the ritual in use at the time of their foundation, which is one of the most beautiful forms of monastic prayer. It is indeed sweet to pray in this church, where there is nothing to suggest the turmoil of the world, but all seems to reflect the serenity of heaven. The chants and ceremonies turn men's thoughts to God, and to Him alone, because they are concerned with nothing else.

Carthusians have a particular devotion to our Lady, and say her Office daily; in fact it is with

this Office that they begin and end their day. Every morning a Mass *de Beata* is celebrated in the name of the community at the high altar, and it is sung conventually every Saturday, unless prevented by the occurrence of some festival. Our Lady's chief feasts are observed with great solemnity, and are preceded by a day of abstinence on bread and water. In the most honourable spot in each cell is a statue of our Lady, before which the monk kneels down whenever he enters and says an *Ave*. Just as the Divine Office brings the Carthusians into intimate converse with God, so the Office of the Blessed Virgin brings them into converse with Mary, to whom they offer so much homage and so many prayers in the name of the Church.

Piety towards the dead is the third prominent feature in the daily prayer of a Carthusian monastery. The Office of the Dead is said publicly on every day that is not a festival, and privately at the death of each religious of the Order. Numerous anniversary Masses are said, and the suffrages for the dead are increased by tricenaries, during which Masses are offered on thirty consecutive days, and "monachatus," viz., six Masses celebrated by each religious immediately after the death of a professed monk belonging to the same house. In this way the consolation afforded to the departed equals the assistance bestowed upon those still engaged in the warfare of this world.

At first sight the penances of a Charterhouse

might seem to be imposed merely in a spirit of severity, but they are really curative, and tend to the recovery of that dignity which human nature loses by excess.*

A sturdy renunciation of superfluities which weigh down our nature is combined with a generous supply of necessities which can elevate it—such is the spirit of discretion that regulates Carthusian mortifications. How many useless and dangerous things are put out of reach by the vows, by solitude and silence! Rising at night, the constant wearing of a hair shirt, the use of the discipline, and of coarse woollen clothing, keep the body in austere vigour, whilst perpetual abstinence from meat, a fast lasting from September 15th to Easter, abstinence from lactinia during Advent, Lent, and on all the Fridays of the year, and abstinence on bread and water once a week secure the sobriety of appetite and sound health befitting the sedentary and quiet life of the Carthusians. Under this régime, strict as well as gentle, severe as well as reasonable, even a feeble constitution generally gains strength, and mind and body enjoy better health. Life is not shortened but is wonderfully relieved from burdens, the body becomes less heavy and the soul more free, and these are the results at which the rule aims. Of course, nature feels the sacrifice of

* . . . ut dignitas conditionis humanæ per immoderantiam sauciata, medicinalis parcimonie studio reformetur.
Or. fer. V., post Passi.

the superfluities of which it is deprived, but the soul experiences the benefit in its increased power to raise itself on high. In making this sacrifice generously, and in boldly seeking to raise his soul to God, the Carthusian feels that he is accomplishing the divine work of sanctification entrusted to him.

Let us now see how the Carthusian's day is divided between prayer and penance. We may take the twenty-four hours as making up the day and the night, each of which consists of three equal parts. In the night we have one central part, which is occupied by the nightly vigils, and the parts before and after are given to sleep. In the day time, on the contrary, the part at the beginning and that at the end are employed in spiritual exercises, the central part is reserved for taking food and relaxation and for manual work. In this way body and soul each claim three sixths of the twenty-four hours, and their shares alternate so that a period of bodily refreshment is always followed by one of spiritual exercises.

These periods are not by any means always of uniform length, for the Office varies, and the occurrence of festivals necessitates a certain elasticity and obviates all danger of monotony, and thus, though the substance is always the same, the combinations produced are very various. Life in a Carthusian monastery is full of interest and animation; uniformity and variety are so judiciously blended as to allow no scope for either

exterior dissipation or interior weariness. The religious, engaged in prayer and penance, scarcely perceives the lapse of time as it passes rapidly onwards to eternity, and when at length he quits his cell for heaven, he will be far from feeling that the way thither has been tedious.

XXII.—The Trappists.

COMMUNITY LIFE AND SILENCE.

Two centuries ago the Trappists revived and still maintain the ancient and venerable reform of Cîteaux. The spirit of this reform has animated many saints, amongst whom St. Bernard shines conspicuous, and it consists in observing most literally and strictly the austerities enjoined by the rule of St. Benedict. Even at the present day, a Trappist aims at conforming his conduct in every detail to the rule of the great patriarch of the Western monks, and apart from some slight modifications enforced by pontifical authority, the Trappists adhere to the severe life of primitive times.

One of the most marked characteristics of their mode of life is that they are always in community and never alone. A Trappist is always with his brethren, at prayer and at work, at meals and at rest ; he relies upon union with others and their good example to aid him in raising his heart to God, and at the same time he has constant opportunities of practising brotherly love and patience.

He is never alone at prayer, for every Office and all the spiritual exercises take place in common. He is never alone at work, for when he is engaged in manual labour, it is with his brethren, and when his work is intellectual, he does it in a public room.

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He is never alone at meals, for all are taken in common, nor at rest, for all sleep in a general dormitory, where the religious are separated from one another merely by partitions.

This unbroken community life, continuing night and day, brings with it a power of detachment as well as a certain degree of penance. In a monastery where there is always a spiritual atmosphere, the soul is readily influenced by it, and suffers no distraction, but almost imperceptibly is uplifted and penetrates to the higher regions of the divine life with greater simplicity and less self-consciousness. On the other hand, never to feel freedom and solitude, which afford so much joy to the soul and seem so indispensable, if it is to realize its highest possibilities, cannot fail to be painful to nature. The penance is a very real one, but it does not amount to a crushing burden.

By the rule in fact provision is made for solitude, the need of which is felt so keenly by souls living the interior life. The law of silence is as strict and as continual as the law enforcing life in community. There is never a moment or an occasion when general conversation is allowed; no recreation or walk or colloquy interrupts the solemn silence that prevails. Leave for private conversation can only be granted for special reasons, and very seldom, but this does not apply to interviews with superiors and directors of conscience. Thoughts and opinions are expressed by signs, whenever the ordinary obligations of conventual

occupations render their interchange necessary. Signs suffice to enable men living as a community to understand one another in the church, at work in their common room, and out of doors as well as indoors.

But, it may be asked, why are men condemned to perpetual silence who are bound always to live in community? One rule is the complement of the other, and silence ought logically to be observed no less strictly than the existence in community. Unless the two were united, there could be no contemplative life. If a man bound to community life were equally bound to talk, his life would be frittered away as happens out in the world, where time is wasted in vain and foolish gossip. This is certainly a danger from which a contemplative must be shielded, and the shield is the rule of silence. A Trappist is always with others and always alone ; always with his brethren and always with God. The rule of community forces him to be with his brethren, the rule of silence leaves him with God. The former rule makes him practice brotherly love, the latter the love of God. He has ever before him the example of his brethren, whilst God's voice speaks in his ears, and nothing is permitted to deprive him of either the one or the other. The two strictest sections of his rule enable him constantly to practice this twofold love and to benefit by these two supports.

Whilst on earth he is sanctified by the love and sustained by the help of his brethren, and he is

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raised to heaven by the love and call of God, and thus in the community life and the silence imposed upon him he finds a perfect law, governing his relations with his fellow men, and facilitating the uplifting of his soul to God. These rules may indeed cause mortification to nature, but they are sources of joy as being means of grace, and whenever the rule imposes what involves a renunciation of human desires, it bestows far more as a condition of intercourse with God. It is a philosophical principle that it is not so much the starting point as the goal that characterizes a movement, and in the same way the religious does not consider his double burden of community life and silence as a mortifying constraint but rather from the point of view of its revealing to him the glories of God. In this way the Trappist is a true contemplative, pledged to forget self and to seek God. This is, as was said before, one of the most characteristic marks of his religious life. Blessed is the monk who knows how to appreciate in their close connection these two laws that govern his life ; they are incomprehensible to the foolish, but inexhaustible to the wise. A man whose thoughts are set on the outward things would feel this common and at the same time silent existence an intolerable burden, whereas one whose heart is set on higher things finds daily refreshment of spirit in this life. This is no doubt the touchstone whereby a man's progress in the Cistercian spirit may be tested most perfectly.

XXIII.—The Trappists.

PRAYER AND WORK.

THE Divine Office, the monk's chief occupation, takes up six, seven or even eight hours daily according to the rank of the festival, which determines the hour at which their day's work begins. On ordinary days they rise at 2 a.m.; at 1.30 on Sundays and festivals, at 1 on the greatest feasts. The Office is chanted more or less slowly and solemnly according to the day. All the canonical hours are chanted in the church and are distributed over the day so as to conform as closely as possible to primitive usage. A conventual Mass is celebrated every day, and on certain festivals, which with the Sundays make up almost a third of the year, the community assists also at a second Mass, whilst all the monks who are priests enjoy the right to celebrate the holy sacrifice daily.

There can be no need to dwell upon the devotion to Mary that inspires the sons of St. Bernard, who wrote such wonderful things about our Lady. Every hour of the Divine Office is preceded in choir by the corresponding hour of the Little Office, and this occurs daily even on days and during octaves when the canonical office is entirely in honour of our heavenly Mother. After Com-

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pline the *Salve Regina* is solemnly sung as a last greeting to Mary, closing the day that began with Matins of her Office.

Every Trappist monastery is dedicated to our Lady, and every religious adds the name of Mary to his own. The Mass *de Beata*, which is the conventual Mass for the lay brothers, is celebrated every morning at a special altar for the intention of living relations and benefactors, and when nothing hinders on Saturday, the Office of the Blessed Virgin is said and Mass is sung in her honour. Her festivals are preceded by a fast, and are celebrated with much solemnity and with a procession.

The Office of the Dead is said in choir every day when it is not prevented by the occurrence of a festival, and many suffrages, masses and offices are offered for the benefit of the dead.

Every month the Office and a Mass are sung for them, and every day a Mass is said for departed relations and benefactors. A whole month, from September 17th to October 17th, is dedicated to the memory of the faithful departed, and during this time each priest offers twenty Masses for them, and those who are not priests say the psalter ten times. On a special table in the refectory three meals are served, which are given to the poor.

Over and above his Office, a Cistercian monk makes a meditation in community, morning and evening, and in what are called the *intervals*, viz.,

the time not occupied either by his Office or by his work, he is free to devote himself to the study of Holy Scripture or of other books suited to supply nourishment to his soul. He has thus at his disposal about four hours daily for the particular needs of his interior life.

Manual work is one of the obligations characteristic of the Trappist Order. Every monk is bound to employ on an average four hours daily in this way ; two hours in the morning and two hours in the evening. Such labour was the penance originally laid upon fallen humanity, and the rule insists upon the humiliation and the fatigue of it as an exercise of mortification beneficial to religious.

A Trappist is called upon to do every kind of work, however painful or distasteful, which is necessary for the maintenance of a house—indoor work, such as cleaning and repairing, outdoor work, such as agriculture and gathering in the crops. All is regulated by the superior and done in the spirit of obedience.

Want of sleep is also a form of penance. The Trappists rise so early that as a rule they sleep only seven hours, and occasionally only six, for they rise at 2, sometimes at 1 a.m., and do not go to bed again after Matins.

All in good health observe perpetual abstinence, only the sick are allowed meat. Lactinia are forbidden during Advent and Lent, on the fasts of the Church, and on all Fridays except in the

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Paschal season. The fasts begin on September 14th and last until Easter, and even between Pentecost and September 14th, Wednesdays and Fridays are fast days, unless the climate, the nature of the manual labour and the state of health of the community make such privations too great.

The use of the discipline, woollen garments worn all the year round, even when heavy work is done, sleep taken on a rough mattress, without removing any clothes ; all these austerities accustom the body not to grow slack in unprofitable ease, whilst on the other hand, the accusations and acknowledgment of faults in Chapter, the public humiliations, and the absolute obedience train the soul to detachment. The Trappist rule is therefore severe, but it promotes vigour of both body and soul. A religious has it in his power to do much to expiate his own sins and those of the guilty world, and the sum of his austerities must have great weight in satisfying God's sovereign justice.

The Trappist Order is governed according to the *Carta Caritatis*, composed by St. Stephen and the first abbots of Cîteaux, and confirmed in 1119 by Pope Calixtus II. This constitution secures uniformity of customs and the dependence of the daughter houses on the mother houses, and of all alike upon the Master General. It provides also for regular yearly visitations, made either by the immediate superior, that is to say, the Abbot of

the mother house, or by the Most Reverend Father General. A house that establishes another is called a mother house, and all the houses founded from it are its daughters, which remain always to a certain extent united with, and dependent upon the mother house, that preserves the right of making a visitation in each of them.

XXIV.—Orders for Women.

THE sacred ministry of the Church belongs exclusively to men ; no woman can be admitted to the ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy ; but although women cannot aspire to the dignity that the sacrament of Orders limits to men, they surpass them in that subsidiary ministry that is the complement of the other higher office, and is assigned to the Religious Orders. In action as in contemplation their zeal finds scope ; they know both how to act and how to sacrifice themselves.

Women know how to act, as is proved by the extraordinary multiplication of congregations employed in teaching, in works of charity and in missionary labours. This phenomenon is perhaps the most striking evidence of the vitality of the Church at the present time. In this respect women have outstripped men, and the number of those entering the various congregations is amazing. It would be impossible to speak adequately of their devotion, or to thank God enough for the blessings that He bestows upon the Church by these channels. No previous century has produced women rivalling in apostolic zeal those of our own time, who brave every climate and every danger, and overcome the barriers raised by prejudice and superstition, conquering every form

of vice and depravity by their sweetness and strength. Such women are, both in Catholic and non-Catholic countries, the most tactful and successful helpers of those engaged in the apostolic ministry.

But women also know how to sacrifice themselves in prayer and penance, and although it is only recently that they have taken part in active life, they have practised contemplation for many centuries. Whoever knows a mother's love can realize what wealth of tenderness and what power of sacrifice may be stored up in the heart of a woman. And when in the seclusion of the cloister this wealth of tenderness is consecrated to prayer and this power of sacrifice to penance, it is no rare thing for women to attain rapidly to sublime heights in prayer and to heroic self-renunciation. Sweet indeed are the myrrh and the frankincense rising up from the desert.*

In the case of nuns, the desert is their enclosure. As a rule their need of protection makes it difficult for them to take up their abode in remote districts; they live in the heart of the cities, but they are far enough from the world to be near to God. Their walls and grilles shut them off from the world, and prevent them from seeing it. In this way they are safe from annoyance and distraction, and have the freedom and peace that they require in order to give themselves up to the austerities of

* *Quæ est ista quæ ascendit per desertum sicut virgula fumi ex aromatibus myrrhæ et thuris* (Cantic. iii. 6).

penance and the sweetness of prayer. They offer themselves up to God in silence on behalf of souls in danger of perishing amidst the world's uproar.

We have still amongst us several of these sacred homes of contemplation, where chosen souls suffer and pray for the world, that little knows how much it owes them.

Each of the three forms of religious life, that we have just been considering, has been adopted with some slight modifications by women, who are consecrated to God according to the form and spirit of these rules. Carthusian nuns, Trappistines and Benedictines have practically the same customs as the men belonging to their respective Orders. They observe the same fasts, have the same Offices and occupations, the same distribution of their time and the same spirit. The few points of difference, necessitated by their sex, do not prevent these religious from really practising all that is essential in the Carthusian, Trappist and Benedictine life.

Others spend their time at the foot of the altar, offering the two-fold sacrifice of praise and expiation, for many active Orders base their work upon the graces won for them by religious women who follow their rule. It is, however, impossible to discuss all the various kinds of religious life, and it must suffice to give a brief account of those of Carmel, of the Poor Clares and of the Visitation.

XXV.—Carmel.

ST. TERESA, that great contemplative genius, renewed in the old and venerable Carmelite Order the spirit of fervour that still animates it. Carmel is above all an apostolic Order as its motto proclaims, *Zelo zelatus sum pro Domino Deo exercituum*. “With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts.” * This spirit has constantly made itself felt from the days of the holy prophet Elias, its father and founder.

St. Teresa, when restoring the Order to its original greatness, had no idea of changing its spirit, and evidence of this may easily be obtained by reading the first chapter of her “Way of Perfection.” It was because she saw how many souls were being lost, especially in France, that she adopted so austere a mode of life. In order to aid those struggling with sin and to triumph over the powers of hell, she armed her children with prayer and penance, the two weapons of contemplatives.

Mental prayer is the essence of the Carmelite life. Twice every day, morning and evening, the community assembles in choir to devote a whole hour each time to this holy exercise. The recitation of the Divine Office, Holy Mass, visits to the

* 3 Reg. xix. 10.

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Blessed Sacrament and spiritual reading occupy successively a large part of the day, whilst nightly vigils are sometimes prolonged far into the night, after Matins and Lauds are ended, though this is a matter of each one's private devotion.

But although prayer is necessary, solitude is no less so, one being the condition essential to the development of the other, and this is nowhere better recognized than at Carmel.

The life indeed is a mixed one ; there are two hours recreation daily during which the hands are employed in some useful work, and meals are taken in common, as a means of promoting union and brotherly love, but nevertheless the rule requires each Carmelite, when not thus engaged, to live apart, alone and aloof, meditating day and night on the law of the Lord. The cradle of the Order was the wilderness on the holy mountain whence it derives its name, and holy Elias, its founder, and his followers, the sons of the prophets, were all men of solitude and prayer, and in the same way each Carmelite convent is a wilderness, where the religious follow their father's example, and, far from the world and its turmoil, occupy themselves with contemplating the things of God. The cell is the epitome of the Carmelite's existence ; in it her whole life is passed except only when she is engaged in praying and working with the rest of the community ; and during the hours assigned to the various duties of her regular life. There, where she takes her rest, as the constitutions

ordain, she has to busy herself with some work, except on feast days, in a spirit of poverty and to supply the needs of her sisters. For this reason there is never a work-room or community-room in any Carmelite convent where the nuns can assemble to do their work, lest—to quote the constitutions again—such assemblies should cause silence to be broken and thus interfere with the spirit of prayer.

Prayer and solitude are, however, only one side of the Carmelite's apostolate. She has to satisfy the spirit of penance and self-sacrifice, and the rule gives her abundant opportunities for so doing. Not only is the abstinence from meat perpetual, save in case of sickness, but every day from September 14th to Easter is a fast-day. Eggs and milk are forbidden during Lent, on all the fasts of the Church, on all the Fridays of the year, except those between Easter and Pentecost, and on the eves of festivals of our Lady. Two meals a-day are served to the community; dinner in the morning and supper or collation in the evening. The hour for dinner varies according to the season of the year and the fasts. Between Easter and September 14th, it is 10 a.m., on the fasts of the Order at 11 a.m., and 11.30 on the fasts of the Church. Supper or collation is always at 6 p.m. On the fasts of the Order collation consists of 6 oz. of bread and a dish of vegetables boiled in water; on the fasts of the Church only 4 oz. of bread and some dried fruit are allowed or

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more correctly the same weight, *i.e.*, 8 oz. of food as for seculars, is allowed. Apart from these two meals no one may go to the refectory without special permission, but this is readily granted in case of necessity, *i.e.*, to religious who are ill or in delicate health, for these are treated with great consideration.

The bed of a Carmelite is a palliasse without a mattress, and her sheets and underclothing are all of wool. A very short time is allotted to sleep, only six hours in summer and seven in winter. The rules of the enclosure are observed with all the strictness of the canons, and the religious are never seen without a veil covering their faces except by their nearest relatives and their superiors. Their very dress suggests poverty and penance; their habits are made of coarse brown cloth, their cloaks are of the same material, but are white; on their feet they wear sandals made of rope, and on their heads coarse linen without any plaits.

The following is the order of the day at Carmel. In summer all rise at a quarter to five, in winter an hour later, and go at once to the choir for an hour's meditation, after which the Little Hours are said. Holy Mass follows, at which the nuns communicate, and then they go to their work, each in her own cell, if possible, and the nature of the work admits it. About eight minutes before dinner they go to the choir for the morning examination of conscience, and after dinner time there is an hour's recreation. In summer, that is from

Easter to September 14th, recreation is followed by an hour's profound silence, enjoined by the constitutions ; this time may be spent in prayer, at work, or in taking rest. Vespers, said or sung, according to the rank of the festival, are at 2 p.m. and afterwards is spiritual reading until 3. In Lent this reading lasts a whole hour, for Vespers are said before dinner. From 3 to 4.45 each one works, then she prepares her evening meditation, which is made in choir, from 5 to 6 o'clock, when supper or collation is served, followed by an hour's recreation. Then Compline is said, and the bell rings for the great silence, lasting until after Prime on the following day. Between 8 and 9 p.m. each is free to practise her private devotions, such as the Rosary, the Way of the Cross, etc. At 9 Matins are said or sung according to the rank of the feast, then the evening examination of conscience is made, and about 11 o'clock the sisters retire to rest ; the hour varies somewhat as the Office is not always of the same length.

Of all devotions dear to the children of Carmel, devotion to our Lady holds the foremost place. Their Order has been specially favoured by Mary, and it enjoys the honour of having been the first to inaugurate the cultus of the Blessed Virgin. In fact it was on the heights of Carmel, the holy mountain, that the first sanctuary was dedicated in honour of the mother of the Messiah, nine hundred years before the Christian era. Throughout the long course of ages the history of the

Order contains innumerable records of benefits conferred by its holy Patroness. She granted indulgences to all who should address her sons by the name of Brethren of the Holy Virgin. She gave them the scapular promising preservation from hell fire and certain hope of eternal happiness. Later on by the "*Bulla Sabbatina*" she pledged herself to deliver the members of her favourite confraternity from purgatory on the Saturday next after their death, and finally she conveyed to a Carmelite, St. Peter Thomas, the promise that her Order should continue to exist for ever.

The zeal shown by the members of the Order in honouring their great Patroness corresponds to the magnitude of the favours received from her. A votive Mass of our Lady is sung every Saturday, or on some other day of the week, if Saturday is not free, and the *Salve Regina* is solemnly sung every Saturday evening and on the eves of festivals of our Lady, besides being said daily at the end of Mass. On ferias the Office of the Blessed Virgin is said as well as the Canonical Office. In the Loreto Litany, said daily in the choir after Vespers, the Order enjoys the privilege of adding "*Regina decor Carmeli*" to the ordinary invocations.

O holy Virgin, glory of Carmel, raise up, we beseech thee, many heroic souls who will send forth from the desert the purifying fragrance of frankincense and myrrh !

XXVI.—The Poor Clares.

THE Order of Poor Clares, known originally as Poor Ladies, aims at honouring particularly our Lord's poverty. It is intended to be a continual protest against the spirit of the age, with its greed for wealth, pleasure and honour, and it also pays perpetual homage to God by insisting upon the most complete surrender to His Providence.

The daughters of St. Clare continue to observe in all its original strictness the law of poverty, which not only forbids each religious to possess anything at all, but also prohibits each community from owning any property. This law, therefore, enforces most absolute poverty upon both the individual and the community. Every day the religious feel the literal meaning of the words of the Lord's Prayer when they say: "Give us this day our daily bread." They ask alms in God's name and are supported by the charity of the faithful; they live as beggars, participating to some extent in the passionate love felt by their seraphic Father St. Francis for his Lady Poverty. This is the characteristic of their spirit, and they add to it in a remarkable degree penance and humility, so as to deserve the name of "Poor Clares" most truly. They accept and love all the

humiliations interior and exterior, public and private, to which their holy poverty exposes them ; it is their treasure and their joy.

They never eat meat, and fast every day all the year round except on Sundays and on Christmas Day. The fact that their feet are absolutely bare must constantly remind them of their state of humble destitution and supply them in cold weather with abundant opportunities of mortification.

Three times in each week the discipline enables them to unite their penances with our Saviour's scourging.

At Carmel, as we have seen, work is always solitary as far as possible, likewise the Poor Clares do not work, as a rule, in common, but almost exclusively in their cells. Over and above their ordinary duties connected with the maintenance and cleanliness of the house, the repairs necessary for their clothing, the preparation of food, care of their buildings, gardens, etc., the Poor Clares devote themselves to making church linen, especially for poor churches. Each religious knows that she has given herself and all her time to God, and she spends her life in serving Him to whom she has dedicated it. She loves her humble occupation, performed in obscurity and silence, for she knows that this secret and hidden sacrifice, which escapes the notice of men, is precious in the sight of God, and rich in fruits of expiation for souls.

Such are the chief points in the lowly penitential

life of the Poor Clares ; what do they do for God with their love and prayer ?

St. Francis of Sales, in writing to an Abbess of this Order, says : " Although I had only a fleeting glance at your community, a mere sight of it rather than close acquaintance, my heart is so deeply impressed with its sanctity, that I cannot depart without exhorting you in our Lord to persevere steadfastly in carrying out the holy inspiration, that God has given you, to bring your virtuous company to ever greater perfection by absolute renunciation of all property, by practising mental prayer and by frequenting the divine sacraments with fervour." This is still the method adopted in the convents of Poor Clares. Frequent confession and daily Communion enable them to satisfy their souls abundantly from the Saviour's fountains. Mental prayer begins and ends the day. Silence is always observed, and is broken only in case of necessity, so they live in that mysterious atmosphere where the presence of God makes itself felt. On week-days no recreation interrupts this silence, but on Sundays and festivals, when the cessation of manual work leaves the whole day free for spiritual exercises, two recreations are judiciously allowed to break in upon them, so that the sisters may practise charity towards one another in conversation and mutual intercourse.

The nuns begin the Divine Office at midnight, and say the whole of it at different hours of the day. The Little Office of our Lady and the Office

of the Dead are also sung in choir, so that every day on an average nine hours are spent by the nuns in the presence of our Lord in the tabernacle.

The life of a Poor Clare is therefore spent with the community in silent work and prayer, and in saying the various Offices. Humble, poor and silent they pray together, work together, and mortify themselves together, that they may win for others the grace of knowing that humility, poverty and charity are the choicest treasures of Christian souls.

XXVII.—The Order of the Visitation.

WHEN St. Francis of Sales founded the Visitation Order, he said that he wished “to give God daughters of prayer, souls so trained in the interior life that they might be found worthy to serve His infinite Majesty and to adore Him in spirit and in truth.”

He said that he “founded the Order on Mount Calvary to serve Jesus Christ crucified, whom all the sisters were to follow by crucifying their senses, inclinations, passions, imaginations, aversions and fancies, for love of their Father in heaven.”

To serve and love Jesus crucified, their heavenly Spouse—to render Him the service of love—these words recur again and again in the writings of the holy founder of the Order. We feel that the great desire of his heart was to offer to our Saviour souls constantly united in love with His sacrifice of love, so as to receive the fruits of it, and convey them to the world by the sweet saviour of their virtues.

To offer to God souls “in whom He might take pleasure,” ever ready to receive the outpourings of His divine charity, was the aim kept in view by St. Francis, who wrote with so much comprehension of the love of God ; this was the service that he wished to render to the Church. He did not impose many visible austerities, for he wished his

foundation to be open to "all generous souls, desirous of attaining to the perfect love of God," whatever might be their age or state of health ; but he opened to his daughters a wide vista of modes whereby to sacrifice and offer up their entire selves, leading them up to this by rules full of sweetness, but drawn up with such wonderful wisdom that feeble constitutions find in them nothing beyond their strength, and strong dispositions find ample scope for their courage.

In the great Orders that edify and delight the Church by their austerities, the body becomes, as one writer expresses it, the altar on which the spirit is sacrificed ; but St. Francis of Sales, on the contrary, sought to mortify the deeds of the flesh by the spirit.* He breaks down self-will more completely perhaps than the founder of any other Order, and as the biographer of St. Jane Frances de Chantal says, "he uses community life as a form of discipline very painful though not causing acute suffering, and he takes care to add to it some thorns, that it had not possessed hitherto." From five o'clock in the morning until ten at night, the day is occupied by a variety of duties following one another at short intervals, so that the religious are constantly called upon to practise obedience and self-denial.

This continual self-denial is intensified by the absolute dependence of each nun upon the superior

* Si autem spiritu facta carnis mortificaveritis, vivetis (Rom. viii. 13).

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to whom she has to apply for every trifling permission, so that twice every day at the end of recreation, the superior is accessible to any of the sisters who have to ask leave to do anything. Opportunities for mortification, self-forgetfulness, charity and mutual assistance are furnished by the two daily recreations and frequent intercourse during work, but it was in the practice of humility that St. Francis wished his daughters particularly to excel, for all "their greatness is in littleness, and their glory is to have none." For this reason he bade them "do everything in a spirit of deep, genuine and frank humility, treating one another with honour and respect, and holding no rank but that assigned to them by lot" at the beginning of each year.

This season is marked by a renewal of the spirit of detachment and poverty. The nuns not only change their beds and their cells, but even "their medals, crucifixes, rosaries, pictures, etc., so as to be more free and unencumbered in following their heavenly Spouse.

Union with this adorable Spouse is facilitated by the hours of silence, which occupy the greater part of the day, by examinations of conscience, mental prayer, and the obligation of remaining always conscious of the presence of God. The chief exercise of adoration, thanksgiving and praise is the Office, but as the Divine Office would have been impossible to most of the elderly and delicate women to whom the holy founder wished

his Order to be accessible, he arranged that the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin should be substituted for it. Chanting this Office takes about two hours and a-half on ordinary days and three hours and a-half on Sundays and great festivals. On the latter each nun is allowed to make an additional meditation both morning and afternoon.

Twice every week the religious of the Visitation renew their strength by receiving the sacrament of penance, and on Sundays, Thursdays, and certain festivals they are invited by the rule to approach Holy Communion.

An annual retreat lasting ten days gives opportunity for considering themselves and their duties, and for seeing if their life corresponds with the promise made to God to "live in the purest state of chastity, in poverty devoid of all possessions, and in obedience based upon absolute renunciation of self-will."

The following is the order of the day in a Visitation convent :—

At 5 a.m., all rise, and spend an hour in mental prayer, which is followed by Prime.

At 6 a.m., the nuns go to their work in their cells or elsewhere.

At 8 a.m., Tierce, Sext, Holy Mass, None, examination of conscience ; then work in silence.

At 10 a.m., dinner, followed by recreation.

At noon, work in silence.

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At 2 p.m., private reading, each nun being allowed to read wherever she likes, in the choir, in the garden or in her own cell.

At 3 p.m., Vespers followed by a conference, at which each nun in turn gives an account of what she has been reading, whilst the others work in silence.

At 5 p.m., Compline, mental prayer, and then a quarter of an hour is free.

At 6 p.m., supper, followed by recreation.

At 8 p.m., public reading or spiritual discourse, after which the great silence begins.

Matins are said and an examination of conscience is made, and the points for the next morning's meditation are read out.

All have to be in bed by ten o'clock.

Sweetness and humility characterize the life in the Visitation Order, "deep humility towards God and great sweetness towards one's neighbour, for in proportion as there are fewer bodily austerities, the sweetness of heart should be increased." This Order opens its doors to generous hearts in weakly bodies, permitting them to traverse the paths of the interior life without subjecting them to severe exterior penances, and it seems to have been the atmosphere divinely prepared to receive the revelations of the Sacred Heart, which bids us learn to imitate its sweetness and humility, and to seek rest to our souls by bearing its sweet yoke.*

* Tollite jugum meum super vos et discite a me, quia mitis sum et humilis corde, et invenietis requiem animabus vestris (Matt. xi. 29.)

XXVIII.—Life in the Cloister.

SUCH then is life in monastic houses ; our instances have purposely been chosen from three different types, presenting in their spirit and observances the greatest varieties, though all are arranged for those wishing to lead the contemplative life. Among Carthusians and Carmelites solitude is the keynote of their existence and purely spiritual occupations are chiefly followed. Trappists and Poor Clares live absolutely in community, and practise greater bodily austerities. Benedictines and the nuns of the Visitation Order live under a simpler and easier rule, so far as the body is concerned, but they preserve an interior spirit no less exalted in its intensity. Everywhere the life is dominated by the same ideas ; the desire to live for God, the determination to enable the spirit to soar by renunciation of all possessions, and the craving to find God, which is the supreme aim of human existence.

The rules vary greatly, but next to the quest of God, which is never lost sight of, their most striking feature is their care lest anything should be wasted, a moment of time, a power of the mind, a particle of resources ; so great is the desire to

keep for God all the strength of human life.* Life in the world is frittered away in so many vain and futile things. Time is wasted, strength is used up, money is thrown away, and on what objects? Souls to whom God offers so many means of rising to Him, forget their high calling, shrink from generous performance of duty, and degrade themselves in unprofitable amusements.

But in the cloister not a moment is unoccupied ; the rule leaves no loophole for idleness by day or by night. Nor is there a human faculty which is permitted to be wasted on unworthy objects ; the goal of all work, affections and thoughts is sublime. No money may be thrown away, or if any useless expense is incurred, there is always a breach of the rule.

The rule allows what is expedient to the maintenance of bodily and spiritual strength, for the great principle underlying all the rules is to develop and raise the individual, to support and increase all the powers of his being, in order that they may be used in the service of God and of souls. Accordingly, food, sleep, clothing, bodily necessities, all that is requisite to vigorous health are wisely ordered and supplied without stint ; but no fanciful luxuries, no distracting superfluities, no enervating vanities, and above all no degrading follies are permitted to diminish and hinder the ardour with which souls seek to rise towards the

* Fortitudinem meam ad te custodiam, quia, Deus, susceptor meus es (Ps. lviii. 10).

high things of God. The world that seeks amusement is alarmed at this life which does not seek it, but the world which suffers, at the moment of serious trial, partially sees the dignity of an existence which has never time to be useless.

Four men of the world went to visit a monastery, and one of them, much interested at the new mode of life revealed to him there, said to his companions: "Gentlemen, I must believe one or other of two things; either these men or we ourselves are mad. We think that life consists in never facing one's real self, but in being constantly carried away by the whirlwind of business or of pleasure. But here are men who condemn themselves to live face to face with realities, with no amusements and no respite. This is a problem that I mean to solve." He did so, and became a monk.

All the rules of the religious life are therefore most carefully drawn up so as to prevent any of the powers of nature or grace from being wasted in unprofitable and selfish pleasure. Man is not made for pleasure but for God; his life is given him that he may spend it in labour, not in rest; he lives to do his duty, not for enjoyment; these are the ideas underlying all the rules. A man may be said to live exactly in as far as he is developing his faculties, and he realizes his vocation just in as far as he works for the glory of God and for the sanctification of souls; this thought supports the religious, and shows us why

the religious life is truly the most complete form of human existence. It is a life spent for one's own good, and for that of others, and for God. It conduces to one's own good, since everything in it grows and develops, all being ordered with the one aim of raising man as near as possible to God. The motto of the religious life is contained in our Saviour's words : " Be ye therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."*

It conduces to the welfare of others, since as the soul of the religious expands and soars, it carries with it other souls, which the weight of human misery tends to drag down to the lowest depths. Finally it is a life spent for God, since He is its one aim, and nothing short of Him can satisfy our hearts. This is the full Christian life in its highest manifestation. Happy are the communities where the ideal set forth in the rules is kept in view with attention, love and perseverance ; life in them is noble and beautiful !

* *Estote ergo vos perfecti, sicut et Pater vester cœlestis perfectus est* (Matt. v. 48).

XXIX.—An Appeal.

IN conclusion I address myself to all those who hunger after self-sacrifice, and thirst for renunciation, and who long to love God and souls with heroic love. To these I repeat the words uttered by our divine Master: "Behold, the harvest is ready." Evil abounds in every direction in our own countries, where the Catholic faith flourished for so long, a wave of movement is felt even in the original home of Christianity, the Eastern lands, that have slumbered for so many centuries; and, nearer still, in regions where the poison of heresy has deadened and corrupted men's faith, some signs of a return to life are perceptible, whilst far away in those new countries only recently opened up to receive the light of truth, the day is beginning to break.

Whether or no the evil is to be checked, that now triumphs openly in Christendom, depends upon you. Whether or no the signs of awakening in the East are to be encouraged and fostered, depends upon you. Whether or no the heretical nations are to be brought back to the purity and vigour of the faith, depends upon you. It is for you to shed the light of truth upon countries where our missionaries are labouring. Will you leave Christendom in a state of corruption, the

East to relapse into apathy, Protestants in their errors and the heathen in darkness?

You have it in your power to give this glory to God and to confer these benefits upon souls ; you have it in your power, and you ought to do it. Do you not perceive the divine echoes of the summons ringing in your ears and repeating the words : “ You can and you ought.”

God gives you the vocation and prepares the arms for you ; the summons tells you that you ought, the arms suggest that you have the power to do this work. God’s call is within you, the arms lie ready to your hand. Suffer not what is within you to slumber, nor what is beside you to rust : listen to the call and take up your arms.

Pray then, pray to the Master of all these harvest fields, pray to Him and offer yourselves as victims for the workers, and that you may pray with greater effect and offer yourselves to greater purpose, abandon this world, where prayer is so difficult and self-sacrifice so imperfect. Come and seek shelter in places dedicated to prayer and penance. Come and consecrate your lives to the noblest work that can be done on earth. Come and give yourselves without grudging and without reservation. Ah ! if men did but know the power of perfect prayer and of complete self-surrender ! If they did but understand the value of our Saviour’s intercession and suffering, and the value of our intercession and suffering when united with His. Remember how St. Teresa by one prayer

obtained the conversion of ten thousand heretics ! Souls filled with faith and love, never say that you are too insignificant for this work. Remember that God hath chosen the foolish things in the eyes of the world that He may confound the wise, and the weak things, that He may confound the strong, and the base things of the world and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen, and things that are not, that He may bring to naught things that are.* If you possess no wisdom, no strength, no prestige, no nobility, if, in fact, you are nothing, you will be the better instruments in God's hands. One thing only is necessary for you. Be ready to put yourselves at the disposal of Him who is and can do all things. Have confidence in Him and in your vocation, and you will see how He can bring forth great results out of your nothingness. He is and remains the Creator.

When Almighty God has impressed on your mortal bodies the sacred mark of penance, and on your immortal souls the still more sacred seal of prayer ; when the irrevocable vows have given God the right thus to take possession of your human existence, then you will feel that though in yourselves you are nothing, in Him you are everything. You will perceive a divine virtue within you and proceeding from you, to give pleasure to God and

* *Quæ stulta sunt mundi elegit Deus, ut confundat sapientes ; et infirma mundi elegit Deus, ut confundat fortia ; et ignobilia mundi et contemptibilia elegit Deus, et ea quæ non sunt, ut ea quæ sunt destrueret (1. Cor. i. 27-28).*

healing to souls ;* and this virtue within you and going forth from you will increase day by day as you grow in intimacy with God. Every day you will know that your influence with God and your power over souls are greater, and your life will gain in fulness and completeness in the eyes both of God and of men, and at the end of your sojourn on earth, at the threshold of eternity, you will have the supreme happiness of being able to say that you have faithfully accomplished the great task entrusted to you, and have wasted none of the talents bestowed upon you.

And you, religious souls, who already have entered this holy bondage and are irrevocably pledged to labour according to your sacred vocation, renew within yourselves the grace of your profession. Never forget it, never neglect it. Though your spirit may be willing, you may still feel some of the weakness of the flesh†; and the enemy against whom you are called to fight, seeks above all to blunt the weapons that are so terrible to him in your hands. May he never succeed in depriving your spirit of energy to pray or in making your bodies shrink from generous self-sacrifice ! When prayer and mortification are asleep in our cloisters, the enemy goes to and fro in the world, sowing cockle in abundance.‡

* *Virtus de illo exibat et sanabat omnes* (Luc. vi. 19).

† *Spiritus quidem promptus est, caro autem infirma* (Matt. xxvi. 41).

‡ *Cum autem dormirent homines, venit inimicus ejus et superseminavit zizania* (*Ibid.* xiii. 25).

O holy souls, given to prayer and penance, are you too few in number, that the enemies abound so greatly? Are you wanting in valour, that our foes are so powerful? O little flock of the elect, not only is there need to increase your numbers, but also to revive your courage. Soldiers who have triumphed in great conflicts, be worthy of your banner. Your vocation is so high that you must not be timid. God and His Church trust in you, and rely upon you. Show yourselves conscious of the honour done you, for not only do God and His Church rely upon you, but God crowns you with His grace and the Church loads you with her favours. What can you still lack? You have everything, a glorious vocation, glorious graces, glorious privileges. It remains for you to show the spirit of glorious self-sacrifice, and then what triumphs you will win for the Church, what consolation you will offer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and what honour you will give to God!

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